



SCHOOLS FACE FUNDING CRISIS

Report by Nick Humphreys

FUNDING to schools in Halesowen is set to be slashed, with more than £18 million to disappear from education across Dudley, according to new figures.

The shock statistics have been released on a website launched by the National Union of Teachers, called schoolcuts.org.

It is predicted that the budget for schools will have to be reduced by 2020 and one of the hardest hit will be Earls High School, which will lose £597,873 according to the figures. That equates to 16 teaching posts or £500 per pupil.

Windsor High School and Sixth Form is also set to be hit, losing £529,417. That works out to £379 per pupil or 14 teachers.

Halesowen C of E Primary is set to lose £143,477 by 2019, which works out to £752 per pupil or four teachers. Manor Way Primary Academy will lose out on £119,726, equivalent of £581 per pupil or three teachers.

Councillor Alan Taylor, who represents Halesowen South, said: "It really is a lot of money that schools can't afford to lose. I'm not sure how accurate the figures really are but the schools can ill afford to lose that kind of amount if it is correct."

Less

"A lot of services are facing big cuts and are being expected to do more with less money. It's happening all over the country as well as in Halesowen."

Across the whole of Dudley, schools stand to lose £18,494,248, which is equivalent to £436 per pupil or 496 teachers.

The website claims funding to schools is set to be cut by nearly £110 million in the Black Country and Staffordshire. The huge sum is equivalent to 2,947 teachers.

Analysts worked out the figures after looking at school budgets, the number of pupils, how much cash will be available to them in 2020, how much cash per pupil schools will lose and the equivalent full time teacher salaries.

The website map lists schools and shows what they stand to lose. Teacher figures are based on the national average salary of £37,000.

Kit Armstrong, NUT Midlands secretary, said: "Every constituency across the Midlands is affected by what is going to be the biggest education funding crisis in years. The Government needs to find more funding for all schools and colleges to avert this crisis."

ATHLETES ON THEIR MARKS FOR YEAR OF SUCCESS



On track for success – young athletes Iris Oliarnyk and, right, Will Hall, with Sandwell leisure chief Councillor Richard Marshall

IT'S going to be a big year for Sandwell's top young athletes, who are gearing up for a busy 2017 – including 17-year-old hockey player William Hall, of Cradley Heath.

Will is already rated as one of the top eight goalkeepers in the country after an impressive training camp with England Hockey at Loughborough.

He had a starring role at the Hockey Futures Cup competition in September and Will is now setting his sights on breaking into the England Under-18 squad.

Another young athlete who ended last year

on a high was 15-year-old Iris Oliarnyk, from Oldbury. Iris is already representing England in the pentathlon and recently won a team gold as part of the England team competing at Athlone in Ireland. She won an individual bronze medal with a personal best score of 3446 points.

Already among the top young pentathletes in the country, Iris will now step up to compete in the heptathlon, meaning adding the javelin and 200 metres to her skills set.

Eighteen year old para-swimmer Scott Hadley, of Tipton, is aiming to build on a bril-

liant performance at the national para-swimming championships in Manchester.

Scott achieved four personal best performances, including gold medals in the men's 100m backstroke and the men's 100m breaststroke representing Orion swimming club.

Scott also picked up two silvers during the two-day meeting, when he was competing with some of the GB para-Olympic team from last summer's Rio games.

Anyone in Sandwell and competing at top level could get backing. Visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/giftedandtalented for information.

TRIBUTE

'King of Rock' Ted Gray dies aged 81

THE man known as the 'King of Rock' has died after six decades at the helm of a famous Black Country sweet firm.

Ted Gray, who ran Edward Gray's of Dudley with his sister Betty, was 81. He had worked at the factory, started by his grandfather in 1826, since he was 15 and continued into his 70s.

His daughter Julie Healy, 53, said: "He was very proud of the business, especially the herbal tablets. Only certain family members know the recipe. He mixed the ingredients himself to keep it secret. He was a very generous man and loved his job."

COURT

Inquest opens on mother's death

AN inquest has opened on a woman allegedly killed by her son.

Hazel Jennens, aged 76, died in Russells Hall Hospital on January 20, 2016. Her son Mark Jennens, aged 39, of Sorrel Walk, Brierley Hill, is facing one count of manslaughter and his trial is set to take start at Wolverhampton Crown Court on July 10.

She was allegedly pushed to the floor, fracturing her hip. Cause of death given was pneumonia and the inquest was suspended due to the court case.

ACCIDENT

Fatal crash as car and lorry in collision

A MAN from Dudley died after his car was involved in a collision with a lorry.

The 40-year-old died at the scene of the crash on the A361 near Ashby St Ledgers, between Kilsby and Daventry, on Saturday morning.

He was travelling in his silver BMW estate towards Daventry when it was in collision with a red Iveco lorry travelling in the opposite direction at about 10.20am.

An air ambulance, road crew and first responder attended, along with fire crews from Daventry, Mereway and Rugby. Northamptonshire Police had not named the victim and is appealing for witnesses.

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Victim, 82, died before blaze broke out

A LOVING grandmother had already died before a fire started in her house due to a dropped cigarette, an inquest heard.

The blaze broke out on the ground floor of Edith Williams' home in Catesby Drive, Kingswinford, just after 11.15pm on November 14.

Black Country Coroners Court heard how neighbours were alerted to the fire after hearing the smoke alarm go off and seeing flames from the downstairs window.

They tried to douse the flames through the window by using bowls of water before emergency services arrived. Firefighters discovered 82-year-old Mrs Williams in her armchair.

The hearing was told that the former bakery assistant had limited mobility and had suffered ill health since 2010.

A fire investigation report into the incident detailed that it was believed she had died prior to the fire from a 'natural event'.

Her son Tim Williams, from Wall Heath, described the incident as being 'their worst fear'. He said: "She was a heavy smoker and would sleep in her armchair and have carers come in to visit. We even had webcams set up so that we could check that she was alright."

"I saw her on the night and left about 9pm. Her last words to my wife were 'where are my cigarettes? We locked the door and she always kept the window open so we would put the keys back through."

"It was our worst fear that she would fall asleep and drop a cigarette."

A statement from fire officer Lee Scott-Richards said: "She was sat back into the armchair with evidence of burns to her clothes but there was no evidence that she was aware of the fire or had tried to make an escape or put it out. It seemed that the death occurred before the fire was established."

The cause of death given was ischemic heart disease and senior coroner Zafar Siddique gave a conclusion of death by natural causes.

Teen shop assistant's gift swindle discovered

A SHOP assistant swindled her employers out of thousands of pounds with a gift card refund scam.

Heerah Shahid, a 19-year-old university student, carried out the con over seven months while working at the Mothercare store at Merry Hill shopping centre. She used the gift cards to buy more than £1,000 worth of goods from the firm's website which she had delivered to her home in Gammage Street, Dudley.

But her scam fell apart when she attempted to record a 'refund' for four pushchairs, worth nearly £4,000, and the transaction was picked up by Mothercare's fraud detection team.

Shahid appeared before magistrates in Walsal, where she pleaded guilty to two counts of fraud by abuse of position. She will be sentenced at Wolverhampton Crown Court on February 9.

Ms Linda Gudgeon, prosecuting, said Shahid credited 15 gift cards with varying amounts of money, recording them as customer refunds from January last year. She used them to buy products from the firm's website in her own name and were sent to her home. In July she began putting money, recorded as refunds, directly into her account. Ms Gudgeon, said the total amount of the direct transfers attempted was £4,644.73.

Mr Sam Christopher, defending, said the second-year biochemistry student, who lives with her parents, had no previous convictions. Shahid was granted unconditional bail ahead of the sentence hearing next month.

Families hit as play centres lose funding

CHILDREN'S play centres and after-school clubs are to close across Sandwell, resulting in the loss of 26 jobs.

Sandwell Adventure Play Association (SAPA) has been forced to axe 14 services after losing £300,000-a-year funding.

The move will leave parents facing significant disruption in their day-to-day lives. As well as play centres, SAPA also provides childcare services, with staff picking up children from school and looking after them at the centres until the parents finish work. It also runs two pre-school playgroups.

Sandwell Council bosses said SAPA had not been successful in applying for funding but insisted the cash would still be available for other providers.

The voluntary service operates from centres across the borough, including at Riddins Mound Children's Centre in Cradley Heath, Wesley Centre in Wednesbury, Kenrick Park Community Centre in West Bromwich, Wiltshire Way Play Centre in Hateley Heath, Wallace Close and Lion Farm Play Centres in Oldbury and the Windmill Centre in Smethwick.

Alternative

After-school clubs open for three and a half hours from Monday to Friday and also between 8am and 6pm during the school holidays to support parents who are unable to get time off work.

SAPA has been based in Sandwell for almost 50 years but funding from the council will cease at the end of March.

Bosses said efforts to source alternative funding had been unsuccessful. A total of 26 staff will lose their jobs.

Field officer Chris Harwood said: "Obviously we are very disappointed and upset. We are stunned. The play centres are based in areas with deprivation or with little or no provision for children to play."

Councillor Simon Hackett, children's services boss, said: "It is important to confirm that the grant for these services has not been cut and that the council has not withdrawn any finance from this area. SAPA was unsuccessful in bidding for grants to support the services they run because their bid was not of a high enough standard."

Sale heralds new era for old pub



The White Lion Inn, on the corner of Cox's Lane, Cradley Heath, has been sold for more than £150,000

AN OLD pub, which has stood derelict for more than 10 years, could get a new lease of life after being sold for more than £150,000.

The White Lion Inn, on the corner of Cox's Lane, Cradley Heath, operated as a cafe during the 1990s before shutting in the early 2000s.

Estate agents Lex Allan Commercial confirmed that it has been sold subject to contract.

Described as the site of a former landmark pub, the sales advert classes it as a commercial develop-

ment with a bar area/cafe seating area.

It states: "To the first floor is a good sized lounge with two double and one single bedrooms. There is a bathroom with corner bath and enclosed shower with sink and WC. The kitchen is compact and has the benefit of base and wall units."

There are spaces for about 10 cars directly outside.

Councillor Chris Tranter, who represents the Rowley ward, said: "I think that it closed as a pub back

in the 1960s, but it turned into a cafe for quite a long while and that was during the 1990s and the early 2000s."

Empty

"Since then it has stood empty. Sadly, the factories that used to be nearby have closed down and it doesn't really serve a housing estate, so it wouldn't really be any good as a pub now. But if it was turned into something good, then it would be welcomed."

Filming to start on Peaky Blinders

THE creator of Peaky Blinders has given an update on series four and said filming was set to start soon.

The 1920s gangster drama set in Birmingham, which is partly filmed at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley, will begin filming in spring.

Birmingham-born screenwriter and director Steven Knight, whose latest drama Taboo is currently being screened on BBC1, said scripts have recently been finalised for the next series, following last year's cliffhanger that saw most of the Shelby clan sent to prison.

Starring Cillian Murphy and Tom Hardy, Peaky Blinders has become an international hit, with particular success in America, and inspired a fashion craze for 1920s haircuts and caps.

PUB regulars have raised £2,600 for the Teenage Cancer Trust after they bared all for a calendar.

Customers at The Cottage Spring, in Brook Street, Woodseton, joined landlady Shelly Price in posing naked.

Nude pub calendar boost for charity

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NEWS IN BRIEF

By-election date after resignation

VOTERS in a Dudley ward will head to the polls next month for a by-election following the resignation of a councillor.

A seat in St Thomas's ward is vacant after Labour's Councillor Glenis Simms stepped down earlier this month, citing personal reasons.

The by-election will be held on Thursday, February 16.

Dudley Council chief executive Sarah Norman said: "I would urge people to make sure they are registered to vote." Polls will open at 7am and close at 10pm.

Care company is to create 30 jobs

A BLACK Country firm which provides care in homes has announced it is creating up to 30 jobs.

Home Instead Senior Care offers support to people in their homes across Dudley and Sandwell.

A range of full-time and part-time roles are being created. Applicants do not require previous experience in the care sector.

The company says among the areas carers are needed are Princes End, Rowley Regis, Sedgley, Gornal, Pensnett, and Blackheath. Call Home Instead on (01384) 259723.

New council tests for taxi drivers

PASSENGERS in Dudley can feel safer when they ride in a local taxi cab thanks to a new driving test for taxi drivers.

Dudley Council has announced it will run the driving tests for all new taxi drivers to replace the former DVSA assessment tests, which used to be compulsory for new taxi drivers. The test fee is £79.66, which is the same as the former DVSA price. Anyone who registers as a new taxi driver in Dudley will need to pass the test.

Bolshoi on big screen live from Moscow

SHOWCASE Cinemas is bringing the Bolshoi Ballet's stunning production of The Sleeping Beauty to screens in Dudley and Walsall.

Ballet fans will have the rare opportunity to watch the world renowned company streamed live from Moscow on Sunday.

The production features a classic score by Tchaikovsky with choreography by Yuri Grigorovich. The ballet will be screened at 3pm. For tickets visit www.showcasecinemas.co.uk

College double success

A COLLEGE is celebrating after retaining two awards highlighting its excellent customer service for students. Halesowen College has been assessed for the customer service excellence award and the matrix standard for advice and guidance, keeping both accolades.

Holocaust survivor at memorial ceremony

A MAN who lived through the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust will be visiting Dudley to speak at the borough's annual memorial event.

Henri Obstfeld was born in Amsterdam, Holland, in April 1940, and some two years later occupying Nazi troops began rounding up Jews.

Henri was saved by a Dutch couple who took him in as their 'nephew'.

The memorial event in Dudley is organised each year by Dudley North MP Ian Austin and Dudley College Students' Union.

Last year, hundreds of people heard Holocaust survivor Susan Pollack describe her horrendous experiences in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

The commemoration is open to the public and will take place at the Broadway campus of Dudley College on Friday, January 27, from 12.30pm until 2pm. It has been organised with the support of the Holocaust Educational Trust.

Students from Bishop Milner Catholic College and King Edward VI Sixth Form College, who visited Auschwitz as part of the trust's Lessons from Auschwitz programme, will also be speaking at the special commemoration.

It will conclude with the ceremonial lighting of a candle of remembrance as the Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Mohammed Hanif, leads faith leaders in a minute's silence to honour the victims of The Holocaust. Mr Austin added: "It's always a very moving and dignified event."

GP's surgery remains closed

THE future of a doctor's surgery which has been closed for more than six months is still unknown.

The Coombeswood Surgery, in Halesowen, closed in May due to a dispute between the tenant GP and the landlord over missed rent payments.

It was the first kind of closure of its kind in England.

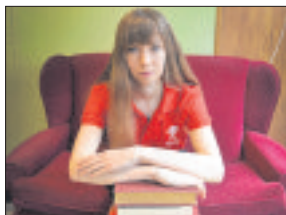
Despite the legal dispute being settled the surgery remains closed due to a hold-up with cleaning the building. NHS bosses had promised the re-opening date would be October 17.

Caroline Brunt, chief nurse at Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "The CCG have continued to work closely with the practice management to progress plans for re-opening the surgery."

Elderly woman in serious condition

AN ELDERLY woman remained in a serious condition in hospital in Birmingham, as The Chronicle went to Press, after being knocked down by a car in Colley Lane, Cradley Heath, on Wednesday morning (January 11).

Woman's mission to halt ivory trade



Ellen Cobb launched an online petition

A YOUNG woman from Stourbridge is leading the fight to bring in a total ban of ivory sales in the UK.

More than 97,000 people have signed Ellen Cobb's petition - including celebrities Louis Theroux and Stephen Fry, who shared the link on social media to their millions of followers.

The 22-year-old, who set up the petition in August, is a few thousand signatures away from the number that will mean the issue goes to Parliament for a debate.

Miss Cobb, of Beale Street, feels

passionately about African elephants that are poached in large numbers for their ivory tusks, which are later carved into ornaments and jewellery.

In September last year the Government took action which fell short of a total ban when Andrea Leadsom, then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, announced a sales ban on ivory younger than 70 years old.

When the petition reaches 100,000 signatures, the issue will be discussed by MPs again. Miss Cobb says that elephants are still being slaughtered

in huge numbers and, while the international trade is illegal, the legal domestic trade means illicit ivory being passed off as antique.

Louis Theroux shared the petition via Twitter to his 1.5 million followers. Stephen Fry also shared the petition and tweeted: "There's STILL an ivory trade in the UK?! Insane. Do sign the petition to ban such wickedness." TV nature presenter Chris Packham, presenter Nicky Campbell and wildlife film maker Gordon Buchanan have also signed. See www.petition.parliament.uk/petitions/165905

Readers owe borough's libraries £31k in fines

MORE than £31,000 is owed in fines across libraries in Dudley, it has been revealed.

A Freedom of Information request shows that 5,482 customer tickets have fines attached in the borough.

Fines for overdue books have a maximum charge of £3, with 18 to 59-year-olds paying 15p per day in fines. But readers aged over 60 or below 17 years of age do not face a charge if their books are overdue.

A senior opposition councillor says that the authority is failing to collect outstanding fines and hard-pressed borough services are suffering as a result.

Leader of the Conservative group at Labour-run Dudley Council, Councillor Patrick Harley said: "This is a big figure and shows that there are clearly problems going on in the council as they can't seem to do the basics - such as collecting library fines.

"Collecting outstanding fines is a basic thing for a local authority to be doing, but they don't seem to be getting it right.

"No wonder they have problems and are continuing to cut front line services - they're not doing what they're supposed to do, which is to collect fines. That money could go towards some of the services which they have now cut."

Helpful

In July the council announced that library opening hours were due to be slashed to save money.

The libraries begun their shorter opening hours last August, to help cut costs and reacting to falling usage.

Councillor Rachel Harris, cabinet member responsible for libraries, said: "Clearly if people owe money in library fines it would be helpful if they paid them and I would ask people to settle any money owed with us.

"While we make efforts to contact people over fines, including writing to them, we must balance the cost of chasing small debts with the money that we will eventually recoup."

She added: "Although fines are a small percentage of the overall budget, they would be helpful in continuing to fund the service, although they are not factored into the budget setting for libraries."

Meanwhile, in Kinver volunteers are in training to take over day-to-day running of the village library, whilst the building remains the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council.



Faye Hewitt (right) from Halesowen and her best friend Holly Loosmore were this week on TV show Coach Trip competing for a luxury holiday

Pals on road to TV show stardom

FROM the freezing cold Black Country to a sun-soaked tour of southern Spain - a Halesowen woman appeared on television on Monday as part of a once in a lifetime road trip.

Faye Hewitt, aged 27, and her friend Holly Loosmore, 28, from Sheffield, met when they worked as holiday reps in Aya Napa and as cabin crew in Dubai.

On Monday the duo were on Channel 4 show Coach Trip on the 'Road to Marbs', joining other fun-loving holiday-makers to take part in exhilarating activities as well as checking out the nightlife.

The length of time Faye and Holly spend on the trip will depend on how popular they both are because at the end of each day, the pairs will vote face-to-face to decide who they no longer wish to travel with. Should they reach the end of the 30 day tour, they will win a luxury stay in the glamorous, sun-drenched Marbella.

Faye, who went to Perryfields High School, said: "If there's one show we wanted to do it would be Coach Trip for the travel and the chance to do it as best friends."

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

AFTER my recent piece on police being unwilling to carry guns, a retired cop recalls that, although he never wanted a pistol, he found himself with one during a raid. It had fallen out of another officer's holster.

ANOTHER ex-cop tells me the prospect of arming some bobbies chills his blood. He says: "Some of the younger bobbies on my old shift were so gung-ho they would have shot each other before they had got out of the parade-room door. Interestingly, the officers really opposed to being armed were ex soldiers."

OH, dear. It's been another terrible week for those people variously described as Bremainers or Remoaners. They deserve a new name, something to capture their growing acceptance of Brexit, coupled with undying dismay. I toyed with Les Miserables but that's far too European. So instead, let us call them the Glums. Having spent months warning darkly that new trade agreements could take a decade, the Glums watched in horror as Boris Johnson met the Trump team and sewed up some sort of understanding with the Yanks over coffee. Okay, it's not a proper trade agreement but as we are gradually discovering, you do not need a trade agreement in order to agree to trade.



A TEAM of blacked-up Morris dancers started their show in Birmingham and were heckled and abused and forced to clear off. Well, what did they expect? The Alvechurch Morris men claim to be following an old tradition of dancers blackening their faces so as not to be recognised by their employers. Bunkum. This practice was confined to small parts of Wales, centuries ago. Why has it become so popular with Morris sides all over England, especially one like the Alvechurch team which was founded less than 30 years ago? Look at old photos of Morris sides and you'll find virtually all the faces are white. Blacking-up is not some revered old tradition but a modern choice, and in the middle of multicultural Brum a very silly choice.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Forensic expertise is knot to be sniffed at

A POLICE forensic expert who has helped solve dozens of serious crimes across the Black Country is being called on by police across the world because of his expert knowledge of knots.

Rob Bone can help establish if someone was a murder victim, held captive during a robbery, or has deliberately bound themselves or taken their own life – all from the way a knot is tied.

He has been involved in hundreds of investigations locally as well as being called on abroad and in other parts of the UK. In 2010 he was able to prove that Bilston trucker Darren Walker had hung himself because of the way the knot for his noose was tied. Walker had hung himself after killing West Bromwich schoolgirl Stacey Lawrence.

Tycoon

Away from the Black Country his expertise was called on to help detectives probing the high-profile death of Russian tycoon Boris Berezovsky in Ascot; a series of sex attacks in Australia where women had been tied up; and an investigation by Ireland's Garda into a series of burglaries where victims had been bound by their hands and feet.

In 2015 the forensic scientist gave evidence at Birmingham Crown Court during the murder trial of Matthew Cherrington, who

By Jack Averty

stood accused of murdering Romanian-born Lidia Pascale and dumping her body in a wheelie bin in West Bromwich. He told the court spots of blood were found throughout Cherrington's property. Cherrington was sentenced to life in prison.

Last year Mr Bone helped secure the conviction of Cezary Sobiewski who killed his partner Barbara Baraniecka in Tipton.

His work as a forensic scientist helped jail Michael Baxter for the murder of his 89-year-old neighbour Sarah Bateman in Halesowen.

Mr Bone said: "I started working in forensics in 1987 alongside a knot specialist and my interest was sparked by his vast knowledge.

"There are more than 4,000 different knots. It's not about being able to identify them all but more what you can learn from how they are tied and the materials used. It is about putting what you see into the context of the case."

Lottery helps church repairs



Listed – St Thomas's Church in Stourbridge town centre

A GRADE I listed church in the heart of Stourbridge has been awarded a £149,100 grant to enable crumbling stonework to be repaired.

The cash, from the Heritage Lottery Fund, will also help St. Thomas's in Stourbridge to improve access.

In 2012 the church's stonework was reported as being in 'a deteriorating and dangerous' condition. The repair work will now be carried out alongside a programme of events to publicise the history and architecture of the Georgian building in Market Street.

The project will restore the exterior stonework of the building and accessibility will be improved. This will include the provision of a permanent access ramp to the South Porch and an accessible toilet constructed in the North Porch. Some of the grant will be used to train guides, organise tours and talks on the history of the building, as well as producing information boards.

The total cost of the project is £207,800 and, as well as Heritage Lottery funding, the church has received grants from The National Churches Trust, All Churches Trust and Garfield Weston Foundation.

Council pays out £8m on mileage

CASH-STRAPPED Dudley Council has paid out more than £8 million in mileage costs to staff over the past five years – 10p more per mile than the recommended amount.

Last year alone the council could have paid out around £200,000 more than it needed to.

The authority has been paying its workers 55p per mile, even though the mileage payment suggested by the Government's Revenue and Customs department is just 45p per mile.

Between January and December last year, the council paid over £1.2m in mileage expenses, although if it had stuck to the recommended rate that bill could have instead been £981,800.

Claims

The rate is 55p per mile for the first 8,500 miles and 13.7p per mile thereafter.

If all the claims last year were at the 55p rate the council would have paid out an extra £218,200.

The figures follow the council's plans to raise council tax by nearly four per cent, which hopes to raise an additional £4m a year.

Councillor John Martin said: "We've scrapped user allowances, including those for bosses, and introduced a single mileage rate for all claims for essential work related travel."



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Stage is set for young performers

CHRISTMAS is more than 11 months away but Birmingham Repertory Theatre is already on the lookout for young actors to star in its forthcoming world premiere production of *Nativity! The Musical*.

The show opens in Birmingham in October, before touring around the country. This new stage show has been written and is being directed by BAFTA award-winning Debbie Isitt, creator of the Midlands-set hit *Nativity!* films which featured Martin Freeman (from *Sherlock* and *The Hobbit*).

The theatre is looking for children who are confident singers, dancers and performers to audition for lead roles. The show has its premiere at Birmingham Repertory Theatre on 20 October and then tours to Southend, Sheffield, Manchester, Plymouth, London and Leeds.

To audition for a lead part children need to be aged between 9 - 11 by September 1 2017, with a playing age of 6 - 10 years, no taller than 122cm and living in the West Midlands. Full details at birmingham-rep.co.uk/news but be quick because the closing date is tomorrow (Friday).

Brum launch bid for Commonwealth Games

BIRMINGHAM'S bid for the 2026 Commonwealth Games is out of the starting blocks with the launch of plans to draw up a feasibility study.

Birmingham City Council has appointed Origin Sports Group to carry out the study during the first quarter of this year, with a final report due by April.

Leading a panel established by Origin is Alan Pascoe MBE, who was vice chairman of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

He has worked on every Commonwealth Games since 1992.

Day hospice services will be moving to hospital in April

France honours Black Country war heroes



Kingswinford veteran Edward Billingham (right) and Leonard Freeman, of Walsall, both age 91, with their medals

TWO Black Country D-Day veterans have been awarded France's highest military honour. Edward Billingham, from Kingswinford, and Leonard Freeman, from Short Heath, both aged 91, were presented with Légion d'honneur medals for the part they played liberating Nazi-occupied France.

The men received their medals from

Walsall Mayor Councillor Kath Phillips at Walsall Town Hall.

Mr Billingham served on the warship HMS Mauritius from 1943 to 1946, including during the D-Day landings. He was also awarded the Russian Millennium Medal in 2015 for serving on the convoys that supplied Russia.

Mr Freeman, who also took part in the landings, enlisted aged 17 and served with Royal Navy and Royal Marines from 1943 until the end of the war. He set sail on one of the many troop ships that formed part of the 7,000 strong flotilla headed for the Gold, Juno and Sword Beaches during the campaign.

A DAY hospice in Oldbury will close with all its services moving to Rowley Regis Hospital, health bosses have announced.

It follows a 12-week public consultation on Bradbury House after health bosses said the building was 'no longer fit for purpose'.

The hospice, in Wolverhampton Road, which is open four days a week, provides care for patients across Sandwell borough.

Bosses say the range of services that are needed to 'ensure responsive and quality care' cannot be provided from the current site. Staff are unable to let people with severe mobility restrictions attend, due to the size of the building, while managers have concerns about site security.

Services and workers will be transferred by April 1. Transport will be provided but patients will have the choice of travelling to Rowley Regis, or visiting an outreach clinic.

Currently Bradbury House serves 12 patients a week over four days.

Decision

The service from Rowley Regis Community Hospital will be able to serve up to 60 patients a week over five days.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) made the decision to support Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust in moving the hospice services.

More than 500 people responded to the consultation. Hospital trust chief executive Toby Lewis said: "A bigger and better service, and using our dedicated transport service, access will not be adversely affected. This is another step forward."

The CCG says it would support the creation of a new in-patient hospice in the Sandwell area and would discuss the issue with councillors.

Apprentice award winner beat stammer

AN APPRENTICE was presented with an award by Olympic gymnast Kristian Thomas after he overcame a debilitating stammer to win an award for customer service and land a job working in a top hospital.

Charlie Beddows, an apprentice at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, completed an apprenticeship as a receptionist at the organisation's learning hub.

His commitment to overcome a stammer that had held him back throughout his life saw him recognised with the trust's 2016 Brighter Futures Award. It also saw him successfully secure his first permanent role at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham.

Charlie, who studied at Halesowen College, said: "I pinch myself every day that I'm doing the job because not in a million years did I think I would be able to do what I'm doing."

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews



NHS: We need to be more realistic

SOME years ago a man came into our office with a complaint about the charity then known as Age Concern.

He was furious that somebody from the charity who was supposed to have planned his door had not shown up.

"Why do you always ask people for their age?" asked our receptionist when he had gone. I suggested that maybe a fit, healthy man in his mid-50s possibly could do his own DIY.

Which brings me to the "humanitarian crisis" which is supposed to be engulfing the NHS at the moment.

There are no easy answers. We have a growing and ageing population and more costly procedures and drugs than ever before, not helped by profiteering drug companies.

And while there are plenty of people who say it is all down to funding, these people tend to have a stock reply when asked how much extra tax they are prepared to pay.

Nothing. It should be somebody else who pays for it.

Then there are the vast swathes of the population who take the attitude that if a service is free to use, they might as well use it.

We've all met them. They take a fortnight off work every time they sneeze. They call their GP when they get indigestion. And rock up at A & E every time they get a headache. And shout a lot when they don't get immediate attention.

A bit like middle-aged men who think a charity for the elderly should do their home improvements.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has come in for a lot of stick for suggesting the four-hour waiting targets should only apply to people with urgent conditions, but I tend to think it is a fair point.

If people expect Bupa standards of healthcare, we are going to have to start paying Bupa prices. All of us. Otherwise, we are going to need a mature debate about what we can reasonably expect from the NHS.

And it might mean that while priority is given to those with genuine life-threatening conditions, those with conditions that can wait might have to do just that. Wait.

□ □ □

A LOT has been made of the number of celebrity deaths over recent months, but none has made me sadder than that of former Villa, Wolves and England manager Graham Taylor.

Maybe it's because football is a bigger part of my life than film, television or music.

But maybe it is because the loss of the bright young manager who arrived at Villa Park in 1987 reminds us of our own mortality.

Either way, he will be greatly missed.



Bank clerk Tanya Nelson weighing out coins in 1983



Batches of coins being moved at the Royal Mint in 1983

Why pound in pocket is all about to change

Our new £1 won't just look very different, its value is nothing like it was years ago, as Mark Andrews reports

HAD a look at your change lately? Noticed how many shiny new £1 coins have been issued over the past few months?

We'll not get too attached to them. By October they will cease to be legal tender.

A new, 12-sided £1 coin – designed by Walsall teenager David Pearce – will enter circulation on March 28, and by October 15 the familiar round pound will be no more. Given that there are thought to be 1.5 billion of these coins in circulation, it is going to be a very big operation.

When the pound coin was introduced on April 21, 1983, the response was muted to say the least. Just 10 months earlier, the 20p piece had been introduced, with many consumers, particularly the older generation, complaining that it was too small – smaller than the 2p, 5p or 10p coins of the day, for example.

Inflation

So when the long established £1 note was replaced by a metal coin after more than a decade of heavy inflation, it was perhaps little surprise that consumers felt it reflected the decline in the pound's worth.

Back in 1967, when prime minister Harold Wilson famously assured us that the pound in our pockets had not been devalued, a £1 note would have bought a discounted winter coat in the sale at Shrewsbury's ABC Warehouse. Or failing that, it would be enough to pay for 10 loaves of bread, or six pints of beer in a pub.

But by the time the pound coin arrived in 1983, it did not go so far – enough to buy a single pint of Carling Black Label, or five pints of milk.

Today, it will typically buy two pints of milk, or a single loaf of bread. But forget a trip to your local – a typical pint is now nearer £4.

As far back as 1980, the Royal Mint ob-



Walsall youngster David Pearce whose design was chosen from 6,000 competition entries

served it had 'become apparent that with the general decline in purchasing power, the £1 unit of currency was more appropriate to a coin than a banknote'.

Before the coin was introduced in mainland Britain, there had been a not-especially-successful trial in the Isle of Man. Many people refused to acknowledge the new coin, causing them to more or less disappear from circulation. The Manx Treasurer was left with little choice but to print a new batch of £1 notes.

The original £1 coin was designed by the Bank of England's chief engraver Eric Sewell, who was very proud of his new design. He said it was very distinctive and could easily be picked out from lesser coins in a purse or pocket of change. But on launch day it was reported that some critics said they would spend it like loose change because that was precisely what it was.

The reasons for switching from the note to the coin were logical enough.

In 1983, a paper £1 note had an average lifespan of just nine months, whereas it was estimated that the new coins would last at least 40 years. The number of early £1 coins still in circulation is testament to their durability.

Unsurprisingly, the vending trade was very supportive of the move, too, as it allowed machines to be adapted to accept larger amounts of money. The launch of the new coin also coincided with the growth of pay-and-display car parking machines.

Given the pound's origins, it is perhaps not surprising that some people felt the small coin had cheapened its value. The oldest currency in the world, the pound took its name from its weight in silver during Norman times – 240 old silver pennies weighed one pound. No

wonder people thought they were being short-changed. The reverse designs of the £1 coin represented the UK and its four constituent parts – Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England and the first series of designs took floral emblems as its theme.

Resistance to the coins turned out to be comparatively shortlived, and the last pound notes were phased out in 1988. Besides, there was far more to complain about in 1990, with the introduction of the new smaller £5 notes and 5p coins. But while the pound coin has largely been accepted by the general public, it has given birth to another problem. Forgery.

From the start, the £1 coin has been forged on a prolific scale. Ironically, one of the reasons the coins proved so popular with forgers was the ease of disposing of them in vending machines.

Surveys by the Royal Mint have estimated that up to three in every 100 £1 coins are fakes, and this has been a major driver in the redesign. David Gauke, chief secretary to the Treasury, has pledged that the new £1 coin will be harder to forge than ever before.

Lighter

The new coin will be made from two metals, with a gold-coloured outer ring and a silver-coloured inner ring. It has an image that changes from a '£' symbol to the number '1' when the coin is seen from different angles. It also has very small lettering on both sides of the coin and milled edges. It is thinner and lighter than the round pound, but its diameter is slightly larger.

While the existing pound coin has changed little since 1983, people's spending habits have, with greater use of plastic and the internet.

According to figures from the Payments Council, cold hard cash accounted for 86 per cent of payments in the UK in the mid-1980s, but by 2011 this had dropped to 55 per cent. The decline in cash usage has coincided with the rise in automated payments such as direct debits and standing orders.

Debit cards made up almost one fifth of payments by 2011, but they made none when the £1 coin was first introduced because the debit card was not brought in until 1987.

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Trump will be a breath of fresh air

FOR some little while now I have been of the thought that Theresa May doesn't seemingly have the stature or strength of character to grasp the nettle and explain to the electorate which direction she intends adopt before triggering Article 50 in March.

The resignation of the UK's top EU diplomat, Sir Ivan Rogers, would appear to have thrown a spanner in the works. I hadn't heard of him before, I doubt if many have, but he is a civil servant who has previously expressed negative views on Brexit, yet remained in post at the top table at the EU.

And how was it that, barely 24 hours before his resignation became known, MPs were lauding his negotiating skills and his vast knowledge of the EU. Then next day brickbats were levelled at him from the disaffected. Why not a murmur from the Prime Minister? British politics stinks of hypocrisy.

I have never been overly impressed with American politics but when Donald Trump chose to throw his cap into the arena for President that aroused interest. Considered by the world to be a no-hoper, the American public proved otherwise. Combative, abrasive and

somewhat politically naive, he is all of those things, but the American public have warmed to his directness and have been energised with his promises of making America great again.

He is shortly to enter the White House as the next President of the United States of America. He may turn out to be a good or brilliant one, or perhaps an abject failure. Whichever, it will be an interesting ride for America and the world – and with is a breath of fresh air

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Stourbridge

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No super hospital solution

SO hospitals are finding that they are unable to cope. Is this any wonder when successive Governments are hell bent on building 'super hospitals' with smaller capacities than the hospitals being replaced?

We are constantly being told of our ageing and increasing population but this seems to be ignored at every stage.

Who are these 'super hospitals' for? To me they seem like ego trips for the architects and those in power who are commissioning the building of these hospitals with little thought of whether the hospitals are able to cope or are user friendly.

We read that already there is doubt about the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital being big enough. Perhaps it's about time that those spending our money should talk to the staff and service users before making these decisions?

LEN HALES
Cradley Heath

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

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EMAIL

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expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and **MUST** include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Leisure centre is key to community life

HALESOWEN Leisure Centre is a social hub for the community. There are clubs that meet there regularly, including Cobra Running and Triathlon Club, Birmingham and Halesowen Shotokan Karate Club, Footwork Dance Academy, Halesowen Swimming Club, Black Country Divers, Nautilus Divers, Stourbridge Swimming Club, Swim-for-it Club.

There are also fitness classes throughout the week. Because of their popularity, some classes are repeated throughout the week, organised by Halesowen Leisure Centre. Of course, there is also swimming available for the general public, schools, childrens' parties, referrals from health professionals and for one-to-one and group swimming lessons. Table tennis, squash and the gym are all also available. I apologise if I have missed out any clubs or classes. I hope this makes clear to councillors that Halesowen Leisure Centre – and I'm certain that Stourbridge and Dudley's centre are just the same – is absolutely key to the fabric of the local community and its quality of life. This is why people are vehemently opposed to the Labour council's proposals.

C STOLL
Halesowen

Politicians to blame for crisis

I ADDRESS my letter to all the politicians who have only just realised that there is a crisis in our hospitals.

I must point out this is not just a winter crisis this as been going on ALL year for a few years now caused entirely by the penny-pinching politicians, who decided it would be a good idea to close a vast number of care homes.

They now are saying the problem in our hospitals is caused by our ageing population blocking beds, but these patients are medically fit to go home but not physically fit, so where can they go?

I must also point out our elderly people have paid and continue to pay their taxes, so instead of blaming the easy target I suggest you start earning your wages.

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FIVE MINUTES FROM MERRY HILL

£22m blueprint for hundreds of homes across Black Country

HUNDREDS of much-needed affordable homes are set to be built in the Black Country in the next four years following a £22 million investment.

Walsall-based whg, one of the Black Country largest home providers, has confirmed it has been successful in applying for a substantial Government grant.

The firm has now vowed to build 751 homes between now and 2021, confirming that the Black Country will see around 200 of the new properties, while the rest will be delivered in Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Shropshire.

Boss backing second cyber crime survey

WEST Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson has urged cyber crime victims in the Black Country to take part in a new survey.

Mr Jamieson has joined forces with other PCCs in Warwickshire, West Mercia and Staffordshire to assess the impact of online crime. The survey asks people to share their experiences of cyber crime via 36 questions – and the West Midlands PCC wants to hear the voice of victims in the Black Country. This is the second regional cyber crime survey and will see how the problem has developed.

Mr Jamieson said: "It is vital that the people of the Black Country have their voices heard on this issue. Crime is changing not falling and cyber crime is an increasingly important issue that affects individuals and businesses alike."

To take part in the survey go to www.survey.monkey.co.uk/r/RegionalCyber16

The company has already confirmed its first schemes will begin in Walsall and South Staffordshire in April. In total 188 homes will be built in the first two years.

Mark Tranter, whg director of development, said: "The successful outcome of our bid has enabled us to secure funding for a significant proportion of our future new build growth programme."

Deposit

"The funding will also include rent-to-buy homes, which will allow our customers to rent a property whilst saving for a deposit to buy their first home."

It was welcome news following disappointment earlier this month when the local garden city scheme, that will see 45,000 homes built across the Black Country, failed in a bid for Government funding.

Plans for the project, which spans 31 different sites, were omitted from the Department for Communities and Local Government's funding announcement.

Bosses behind the Black Country plans admitted the decision was 'disappointing' but insisted that the garden city scheme would go ahead.

Tree of Light raises over £13,000



Mary Stevens Hospice fundraising Tree of Light raises thousands for the charity

THE Mary Stevens Hospice's annual Tree of Light remembrance services have raised more than £13,000 for the charity.

Each year, ceremonies take place across the region for the families and friends who have lost someone close to them, often having spent time in the care of the hospice.

Three ceremonies took place in November 2016 in Stourbridge Old Edwardians Club, Oldswinford Hospital School and St John the Baptist Church in Halesowen. Those attending had the opportunity to purchase a candle to light at the ceremony, or sponsor a light on the hospice's famous tree which is lit by thousands of lights from late-November until January 5.

The donations received as part of the Tree of Light ceremonies totalled £13,224.62.

Charlotte Schofield, head of fundraising and lottery, Mary Stevens Hospice Group, said: "Our Tree of Light services are always a very emotional time for everyone here at the hospice and in our community."

"Taking the time to remember those we love is so important, and we all gain an enormous amount of strength by coming together as a community to pay our respects. The tree, much like the hospice, is a beacon of love and support for people in their time of need."

To find out more about the work of the Mary Stevens Hospice, visit www.marystevenshospice.co.uk website.

Jack's toy raffle is an inspiration

A KIND-HEARTED 11-year-old ruffled off his unwanted toys to raise money for Mary Stevens Hospice.

Jack Thomas, from Stourbridge, sent a personalised letter along with the £30 donation to the Hagley Road hospice.

It has since gone on to cause a stir online – being read more than 60,000 times – and gaining the charity's biggest public response on its Facebook page.

Hospice bosses have praised the Greenfield Primary School pupil, saying his donation was equivalent to feeding 10 people at the hospice for a day.

Jack organised the raffle. His grandparents, auntie, uncle, cousin, brother and parents all bought tickets and raised the £30 donation, which Jack hand delivered to the Mary Stevens charity shop in Stourbridge over the Christmas period, along with his letter.

Jack said: "I just wanted to help the hospice out and am overwhelmed by the comments I have received. I really enjoyed organising the raffle and it means a lot to me that my family support me with so many things I do."

In his letter, Jack said the big draw for his raffle was held on Christmas Eve and his brother was delighted when he won Jack's old yo-yo.

Happy diet talk by Michelin-star chef

CELEBRITY chef Tom Kerridge is coming to Birmingham to talk about his new book Dopamine Diet and his own dramatic weight loss.

His talk at Birmingham Town Hall has been arranged with city book shop Foyles. The Michelin-starred chef will appear on Monday at 7.30pm with ticket price including a copy of the new book. The recipes put the focus on healthy food that releases the 'happy hormone' dopamine.

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Church site ready to rise from the ashes



Reverend Leon Evans assessing the damage outside the Zion Christian Centre, in Halesowen, after the blaze in 2015

A CHRISTIAN centre hit by a blaze more than a year ago is set to rise from the ashes

Dozens of firefighters tackled the fire at Zion Christian Centre in Little Cornbow, Halesowen, in the early hours of August 30, 2015.

Extensive damage was caused to at least half of the centre's auditorium and smoke damage affected the rest of the building.

Now plans have been put forward for two of the site's buildings to be refurbished.

A new 400-seater auditorium and conference facility, along with an upgrade of offices, toilets and front of the building, has been put forward as part of the application.

Reverend Leon Evans, who has been the church's pastor for more than 15 years, spoke of his delight that the church centre was to be restored.

Insurance

He said: "We had the insurance money come through before Christmas, so it took around 15 months for us to get it."

"We had four other buildings so we moved into the other two following the

fire. With the refurbishment now we plan to put the two buildings together to make a new 400-seater auditorium and conference centre."

Mr Evans said looking back, the fire had been 'somewhat blessing in disguise' as it had encouraged the community to work together.

"We've had more people come to the church than before," he said.

The plans include an illuminated sign.

A design statement says: "The Zion Christian Centre are looking to retain the 'industrial aesthetic' of the existing building but to ensure that the spaces are modern and welcoming."

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More than 1,800 are seeking help as debt crisis worsens

NEARLY 1,800 people across Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall contacted a debt charity in just six months – seeking help with liabilities totalling nearly £25 million.

A total of 1,778 people in the DY, WV and WS postcode areas contacted the StepChange charity during the first half of 2016, equivalent to 10 calls every day.

The WS postcode area had the biggest average debt levels at £15,932 for each individual.

Museum offer bonus for members

PRIORITY booking for some of the Black Country Living Museum's top events will soon be available.

Tickets for Peaky Blinders events, 1940s Weekend and more went on sale yesterday (Wednesday) for members with a 20 per cent discount.

Members will also be entitled to event fast tracking, 25 per cent off for friends and family daytime visits, 20 per cent off food and shopping and will be treated to a series of exclusive behind-the-scenes experiences.

Included with membership is 12 months' unlimited daytime entry to the museum which includes access to the programme of daytime events and activities. This will include 'Industrial Might' in April, 'Steam Weekend' in May and even a 1940s-themed 'Dig for Victory' weekend in the autumn.

Prices start from £30 a year for a single membership going up to £65 a year for a family (two adults and up to three children). Visit www.bclm.com for information or to book tickets.

The charity provided help to a total of 614 people in the area, up from 590 during the same period the previous year, and the total level of debt rose from £9.4 million to £9.8 million.

A total of 645 people from the WV postcode area contacted the charity during the first six months of last year, with an average debt of £12,415.

Total debt in the area that the charity helped with was just over £8 million, up from £7.3 million compared to the previous year.

The Dudley postal area, which includes Tipton, Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley, accounted for 519 of the charity's calls, and the average amount owed was £13,459. These figures were a marked improvement compared to the previous year, with total debt falling from nearly £9.2 million to just under £7 million.

In the Birmingham postcode area – which includes most of Sandwell – 2,919 people contacted the charity about debts totalling £39.6 million – an average of £13,565 for each person – while the ST postal district – including Stafford – saw 828 seek help with debts totalling £12.6 million – an average of £15,205 per individual.

Low interest rates are encouraging more people to take out loans or buy on credit. But there are fears people are borrowing beyond their means and a rate rise could see a rush of repossession.

MP says UK should back Trump trade deals



President-elect Donald Trump wants to help with Brexit

BRITAIN must aim for the 'best possible business relationship' with the US to make a success of Brexit, says Dudley South MP Mike Wood.

The Conservative MP has welcomed comments from President-elect Donald Trump, saying that Britain and America will get a new trade deal 'done quickly and done properly' as he promised to help make Brexit work.

Mr Wood has urged ministers to 'get behind' Mr Trump as he prepares to enter the White House tomorrow (Friday).

Mr Trump has pledged to meet with Theresa May to discuss trade relations soon after his inauguration.

Mr Wood, who last July met with members of Congress in Washington DC to discuss the possibility of Mr Trump becoming president, said: "At the time there was a great deal of concern from both Democrats and Republicans about what Mr Trump would be like should he become president."

"We have now moved on from that and are in a position where we should be getting behind him and pushing for the best possible business relationship between our two countries."

Market

"The early indications are that Mr Trump wants to build on the long-standing connection that exists between us. Without the EU, America is the single largest market for Britain. Mr Trump's comments suggest there is huge potential for the Prime Minister to secure a strong trading deal."

Mr Trump said that Britain was 'doing great' following its vote to leave the EU, and added that the UK was 'so smart in getting out'.

Labour's Walsall North MP David Winnick has accused Mr Trump of 'patronising and belittling' the UK by suggesting America could play a defining role in Britain's future outside the EU.

Merry Hill's bus station revamp starts

WORK to revamp Merry Hill bus station was getting under way this week.

The £550,000 upgrade will see the addition of enclosed shelters with covered walkways and real-time information boards.

The scheme is being carried out by centre owners Intu and Transport for West Midlands (TFWM), part of the West Midlands Combined Authority. Bosses were keen to improve the station for shoppers and ensure they no longer have to cross in front of buses. Around one in five visitors arrive at Merry Hill by bus.

The station refit is due to be completed by late spring and during this time the car park near Matalan will be partially closed.

Councillor Richard Worrall, chairman of TFWM, said: "Intu Merry Hill is one of the biggest retail and employment centres in the West Midlands and good public transport links and infrastructure are of huge importance, so I am delighted we are able to work with Intu in improving bus facilities there."

House hosts showcase for bridal dresses

A BRIDAL gown showcase is being held at a country house near Stourbridge later this month.

Blakelands Country House, at Halfpenny Green, will be showcasing a range of bridal gowns on Sunday, January 29.

Brides-to-be will be able to try on all the latest wedding dresses from Georgina Scott Bridal of Stourbridge. The event will be held in the Victorian Barn from noon to 4pm. Admission is free.

Blakelands owners Paul and Heather Morgan, will be on hand to give brides help and advice. Heather Morgan said: "We realise that choosing a wedding dress is probably one of the most important decisions for a bride to make."

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Call to bring museum back into use quickly

DUDLEY'S former museum building must be brought back into use as soon as possible, council bosses say.

Chiefs insisted the historic building in the town centre, which controversially closed its doors just before Christmas after more than 100 years, should not be left empty for any longer than necessary.

It has also been revealed that collections from the St James's Road museum and art gallery, which have been moved to the Dudley Archives in Tipton Road, will be back on display by August. This is so the award-winning new venue will be ready to accommodate school trips from September.

The council decided to close the museum in order to make savings of around £150,000, concluding that it was no longer fit for purpose. A report ahead of a meeting of Dudley Council's overview and scrutiny management board today (Thursday) reveals the building is intended for staff training and conferences. This currently takes place at Saltwells Education Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton, which is being considered as a potential site for housing.

Collection

The packing up of exhibits at Dudley Museum is expected to take three months.

The report also reveals plans for the Brooke Robinson collection of artwork and artefacts donated by the former MP, be displayed on the ground floor of the existing museum building in the town centre.

The report to the board calls for "the relocation to be co-ordinated to ensure that the vacated building is brought back into active use without unnecessary delay and as soon as reasonably practicable". It adds: "The necessary



The former museum and art gallery building in Dudley town centre

refurbishment works should be undertaken as soon as practicable."

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, cabinet member for planning and economic development, said: "These plans will ensure it still has an important role."

An open afternoon is taking place at Dudley Archives on Tuesday, from 2 to 4pm, where visitors can give their views.

It has been revealed that part of the Duncan Edwards football memorabilia collection, which had been housed at the museum for the past decade, will

be loaned back to Dudley by the collection's prospective new owners Manchester United.

The council says that the club had agreed 'in principle' to a loan deal over the collection, which includes the Dudley-born football hero's England caps, shirts, medals and trophies. According to council bosses the Edwards family are in negotiations over the sale of the collection to the club. Any items loaned back would go on display at Dudley Archives.

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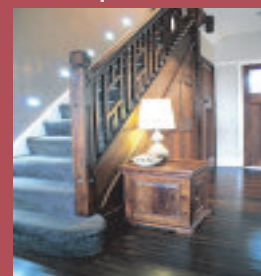
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Ice cream blunder sparks apology to pupils' parents

MUSLIM children at schools in Sandwell were served ice cream containing pork gelatine after a supplier sent out the wrong product.

The error was said to have affected a 'small number' of schools across the borough, including Lodge Primary School in West Bromwich, where a letter has been sent to parents apologising for what happened.

The mistake was only flagged up after some pupils at the school, which has a large Muslim intake, had eaten the ice cream. The dessert was a new addition to the school's menu. Lodge Primary School headteacher Lisa Gillam said the mistake was 'unacceptable' after being provided with the ice-cream by SIPS Education.

Hit-and-run probe opens on woman, 88

THE inquest into a pensioner who was killed in a hit-and-run crash has been adjourned as police try to track down the driver.

Mary Elizabeth Humpherson, aged 88, who was known as Betty, was taken to hospital with serious injuries after being struck by a silver Ford Mondeo on Birmingham Road on October 21. The driver abandoned the car and ran off following the smash, which happened just before noon near the junction with Peak House Road.

Mrs Humpherson died later the same day.

Sgt Chris Ridge, collision investigator from West Midlands Police, said: "We have not identified a driver as such yet."

"Inquiries are still ongoing. Evidence has been gathered but it is DNA based. I am confident that we will identify a suspect in the next few weeks and an arrest will be made."

Assistant Coroner Angus Smiley adjourned the inquest for six weeks.

She said the supplier had sent the wrong product and she would be making a formal complaint as eating pork is forbidden as part of Islamic tradition. The Oak Lane school has 430 pupils, with the number from ethnic minority backgrounds higher than average. Around 30 per cent are of Bangladeshi origin.

Ms Gillam, in a letter sent out on Friday, said: "I was writing to apologise as today at lunchtime some of the children unfortunately consumed some ice-cream which contained pork gelatine. We have spoken to SIPS, who are in charge of the menus that the school are allocated, and they've informed us the supplier sent the wrong product in error."

"I understand this is not an acceptable reason as we do not serve any products to children that contain products such as gelatine and SIPS is aware of this as the majority of our children have vegetarian food."

"I have informed our chair of governors, Nigel Edge, and will be making a formal complaint." A spokesman for SIPS Education said: "A full and immediate investigation is in progress to resolve this matter."

Morris dancers in city centre are heckled

A BLACK Country Morris dancer has described the actions of people who heckled a group of dancers with blackened faces as 'unacceptable'.

The dancers, who hail from Alvechurch, near Bromsgrove in Worcestershire, were threatened by a group of spectators during performances they put on in Birmingham city centre on Saturday, January 7, which took place in front of shoppers.

The dancers blackened their faces as part of the Border Morris tradition, which features groups from villages up and down the Welsh border, but particularly Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire.

But they faced abuse from some people, who were accusing them of being racists during the performance.

Dave Jeffery, who is the treasurer at Sedgley Morris Dancers, was also in the city centre performing on the day, but was not present when the alleged abuse took place.

He said: "I can understand some people may think it is offensive - but this is an English tradition. The blackened faces are to provide a disguise, it has nothing to do with race."

"But what happened was unacceptable."

The Alvechurch dancers were one of several morris groups in the city on the day, celebrating Plough Monday.

The event marks the start of the agricultural year.

Mr Jeffery said his group, which do the Border Morris dance, do not face common disruptions when performing.



Morris Dancers with blackened faces in Birmingham city centre were heckled. Picture courtesy of B4 Parking

Plants worth £100k found at property

CANNABIS plants with a street value of £100,000 were found growing at a property in Tipton.

Police raided a house in Hamilton Road in Great Bridge where the mini drugs factory was uncovered. A 31-year-old man was arrested at the scene last Wednesday.

Tweeting about the raid, @TiptonTownWMP said: "Tipton Ward officers conducted a drugs warrant on Hamilton Road Great Bridge this morning."

"There was approx street value of £100,000 pound worth of drugs found in the property."

"A 31-year-old male has been arrested and is currently helping of officers with their inquiries."

Meanwhile in a separate raid police seized 30 plants at a property in Filey Road in the early hours of Wednesday.

Officers from the Low Hill, Fallings Park, Bushbury and Oxley Wolverhampton neighbourhood police team attended the property and shared the news of the discovery on social media.

Tweeting about the raid, @LowHillWMP said: "Officers seized over 30 Cannabis plants yesterday at an address in Filey Road, Fordhouses. #CannabisCultivation #InPoliceCustody #Drugs."

The news comes as police recently recovered £2 million of 'dirty money', including that which had been involved in drug crime, in less than a year.

The money will now go to good causes.

NEC-based concrete show has mortar it

THE UK Concrete Show, now in its seventh year, will stop off at Birmingham's NEC next month.

It is Europe's largest dedicated concrete show. The event is on February 15 and 16.

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Acenta moves forward with £23m financing

STEEL processing firm Acenta, which has two major sites in the Black Country, is set for continued growth after sealing a £23m refinancing deal with HSBC.

Acenta Steel is one of the UK's leading processor and distributor of hot rolled and bright engineering steel bars and is working with HSBC and HSBC Global Receivables Finance.

HSBC's refinancing package will allow Acenta to continue to offer its portfolio of highly differentiated products for a range of sectors, including the hydraulics and automotive sectors.

The £60m-turnover business operates from six UK sites, including Willenhall and Dudley, and exports over 40 per cent of its steel to global partners.

The refinance will allow Acenta to

continue to invest in stock and capital to maintain its position as the number one processor of bright bar in the UK and to provide one of the broadest product ranges of engineering bar in Europe.

Bright bar is precision finished material for component manufacturing in wide ranging and demanding engineering applications such as engine, driveline and suspension parts, hydraulic valves and household goods.

In addition to processing steel, Acenta says it has a unique vertically integrated supply chain providing stock-holding, cutting and distribution facilities from the UK. The business aims to build on exports to Mexico, Eastern Europe and Asia.

Acenta also has operations in Rugby, Manchester, Newport, Sunderland, and Southampton.



Acenta Steel grows – Graham Hay of HSBC, Tarlok Singh and Colin Mills of Acenta, and Gary Riley of HSBC

Zoo wins award for 15th year straight

DUDLEY Zoo has been awarded a national award for quality – for the fifteenth consecutive year.

The Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme award is issued by Visit England and follows a secret visit by the tourism industry regulatory body, who praised zoo staff for their enthusiasm and friendliness.

Zoo director Derek Grove said: "We're a totally unique tourist attraction and we're delighted with the report which provides an unbiased viewpoint of the visitor experience we provide."

The report complimented staff for their efficiency, knowledge, customer care and appearance as well as highlighting the zoo's car park and entrance, safari shop, well-maintained grounds, vast range of animals and our new exhibits.

He added: "We had a very busy 12 months and have continued to invest in the 40-acre site."

"Our staff have worked incredibly hard to achieve a huge amount of growth and progress, helping us achieve a 30-year high of 310,000 visitors being welcomed to the zoo."

Number of attacks on fire crews has risen

ATTACKS on firefighters in the line of duty are on the up, according to new figures.

In the last four years, a total of 309 firefighters in the West Midlands have been subjected to assaults.

From April 2015 to April 2016 there were 67 assaults but this increased to 77 in just eight months, from April to December.

Verbal assaults have dominated the incidents, with a total of 50 such incidents reported in April to December last year, an increase from 43 in the previous year.

The throwing of missiles also featured with 12 such attacks reported in those eight months, an increase of four on 2015/16.

Physical assaults were listed third in the figures, with five reported from April to December 2016, an increase from the one that took place in 2015/16.

There were also four instances of threatening behaviour reported, as well as three recorded cases of harassment.

Nuisance

A statement from the West Midlands Fire Service on the findings said: "Attacks can be verbal or physical, and might include hindrance or nuisance while firefighters are responding to and resolving incidents. When an attack is reported, it is referred to a station commander to consider and act on as needed."

"Any attack upon our firefighters is one too many, and will not be tolerated. Where appropriate, we will work closely with West Midlands Police to bring culprits to justice."

"All of our fire stations put great effort into build-

By Jessica Labhart

ing very strong links with their local communities, building trust and understanding upon which they can draw at incidents if necessary."

In 2013/14 there were 92 assaults, with 63 verbal assaults, 15 missiles, five instances of threatening behaviour, four instances of nuisance, three instances of physical contact, one injury and one assault involving a weapon.

The news comes as recent figures revealed which stations in the West Midlands were the busiest in 2015.

West Bromwich topped the call-out list with a total of 1,172 calls in the whole of 2015. The station was closely followed by Fallings Park in Wolverhampton with 1,072 and Wolverhampton with 888. The stations with the fewest call-outs were Wednesbury with 119 calls, Tettenhall with 136 and Aldridge with 283.

Out of the 1,172 call-outs for the 24-hour fire crews from West Bromwich, 204 were equipment false alarms and 11 malicious false alarms. Eighty calls were for traffic accidents and 118 for property fires.

Museum seeks more business partners

THE Black Country Living Museum is seeking to add new members to its Business Partner scheme.

The museum in Tipton Road, Dudley, has a number of opportunities for business partners including entertaining clients, increasing brand awareness and staging special events.

Partners can also hire rooms at the museum and also get involved in sponsorship and get staff involved in volunteering.

To find out more about becoming one of the Black Country Living Museum's partners, or to discuss a bespoke package or sponsorship, e-mail development@bcm.co.uk or call 0121 557 9643.

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At last! £7.5m boost will tackle pothole pitted roads

THE West Midlands and Staffordshire are to be given more than £7.5 million to tackle potholes.

The Government has revealed the amount each region will be receiving in the next financial year to fill in potholes as well as stop them forming in the first place.

The West Midlands will receive £7.67 million overall, including £1.22m for the West Midlands Combined Authority and £1.58m for Staffordshire. The

Car smashes into the Billy Wright statue

THE iconic Billy Wright statue outside Wolves' Molineux stadium has been badly damaged after it was hit by a car.

The plinth on which the statue of the Wolves and England legend stands was ripped apart by the force of the collision.

A man has been arrested on suspicion of drink-driving. He has since been bailed.

Three slate slabs have torn off the structure, including the panel that carries Wright's name, which was smashed in two.

Vicky Wright, the daughter of the late player, said she was 'so sad' to hear about the statue.

The damage to the sculpture became visible as dawn broke on Sunday. Police cordoned off the area with tape.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: "A 30-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of drink-driving and dangerous driving."

Government says the funding for the West Midlands, which also includes Hereford, Shropshire and Stoke, will lead to around 144,000 potholes being fixed in 2017/18.

Transport minister Andrew Jones said: "This Government is investing record amounts improving and maintaining highways across the country to help motorists."

The new funds have been backed by South Staffordshire MP and the Conservative chief whip Gavin Williamson. The Kinver MP said: "The state of our roads is consistently raised with me by residents and remains a great source of frustration for drivers."

"This funding is welcome news for families and businesses in Staffordshire who rely on our roads to get around. It builds on the £1,069,000 we got last year and is the latest step in our plan to build a country that works for everyone."

"The announcement shows that we are delivering on our commitment to invest in infrastructure to attract businesses and secure a better future for local businesses."

The funding allocated specifically for potholes is part of more than £115m the West Midlands is receiving to improve roads, cut congestion and improve journey times.

Including its £1.22m pothole fund, West Midlands Combined Authority is to receive £21.5m. The authority includes all four Black Country councils.

Boy names teddy after donor who saved him



Angela Land and Kristof Polgar – emotional meeting

A NINE-YEAR-OLD boy from Kingswinford met the mother of the young man who enabled him to have a life-changing liver transplant.

Kristof Polgar, was born with a genetic condition called Progressive Familial Intrahepatic Cholestasis (PFIC) that caused his liver to fail. When he was just three years old, he received part of Justin Charman's liver in an op at Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Not only did the transplant give Kristof the gift of life, it saw him go from strength to strength at sport and he now a junior star of the British Transplant Games, winning a staggering eight medals for his performance in the racket sports section over three years.

Justin Charman was aged just 21 when he took his own life in February 2011. Justin was an award-winning aircraft engineer apprentice in Somerset and had been receiving therapy.

When he died, Justin's organs were given to five people, including Kristof.

Mother

Now, Kristof has met the mother of his life-saver, Angela Land, aged 52, who lives in Bath. They met at Westonbirt Arboretum near Gloucester.

Kristof's mother, Erica, said: "Kristof was born with his liver problem. He couldn't even walk because he was so weak. So he learned to walk after his transplant. We wanted to meet with Justin's mother to thank her. We spent the day together. It was quite emotional. Kristof asked what Justin's favourite colour was and discovered it was blue, the same as his."

Erika said: "After the transplant, Kristof became strong, he started to walk in just a few weeks after the transplant."

Kristof decided to name his teddy bear after Justin so he can cuddle him.

Angela said: "Nothing will bring my son back but it does bring comfort to know that he has helped so many people, including Kristof."

To join the NHS Organ Donor Register visit www.organdonation.nhs.uk or call 0300 123 2323.

NHS mental health drop-in session dates

DUDLEY and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust will be holding a series of drop-in events during 2017 at libraries within the borough.

The emotional health and wellbeing drop-ins are run by the Trust's Community Development Workers (CDWs) and will provide members of the public the opportunity to find out more information about improving their mental health and overall wellbeing.

The drop-ins are a chance for the local community to gain information from the CDW team, who will be on hand to signpost individuals and support them in contacting appropriate services and organisations. No booking or appointment is necessary.

These sessions will run on February 15 at Stourbridge Library between 1pm and 2.30pm, at Halesowen Library on March 2 between 10am and midday and at the same time on March 30 at Brierley Hill Library.

First steps to be made on Metro extension

THE Midland Metro Alliance is set to take the first step towards a Metro extension in the Black Country this week.

The alliance – working on behalf of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) – will begin to make progress on the proposed extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill, clearing vegetation from overgrown areas of the old South Staffordshire line.

Route construction is anticipated to begin during 2019 and to be open for passenger service four years later.

WMCA lead member for transport, councillor Roger Lawrence said: "Whilst this is not the formal start of work on the extension, it is the first step towards it."

The clearance work should be completed in around two weeks, and all those affected have been informed.



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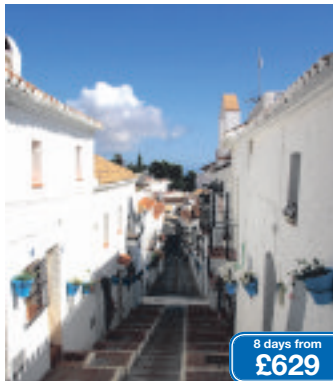
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Self-service ticket extension

BRAND new self-service ticket machines have been unveiled at train stations across the Midlands.

A total of 28 new machines have been installed across the London Midland network in Shropshire, Staffordshire, the Black Country, Birmingham, Worcestershire and Warwickshire.

It aims to make rail travel easier as part of a £15 million ongoing programme of investment in technology.

The machines have been set up at several stations including Dudley Port and Birmingham's Adderley Park, Duddeston, Gravelly Hill, Perry Barr, Small Heath, Stechford, Tyseley and Witton.

The machines feature contactless technology to speed up the process of buying a ticket and also offer options to reach any destination in the UK. They can also be used to collect tickets ordered online via London Midland's click and collect system as soon as 15 minutes after ordering.

Cinderella panto is given modern twist



Prince Charming (Dan Wright) and Cinderella (Megan Luckins) with fellow cast members

IT will be a case of whose foot will fit the glass slipper when a fairytale pantomime hits Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

Cinderella will be given a modern twist as Brierley Hill Musical Theatre Company put on the performances this weekend. Jo Gresswell, production director, said: "It'll be a spectacular show with a mixture of veterans and new people. The music will be very pop orientated too featuring Justin Timberlake's Can't Stop the Feeling and Jess Glynne's Hold My Hand. It's very family friendly."

"There are 40 people in the group and we perform throughout the year. In April, we do a charity concert that raises money for Action Heart and the Lifeboat Association. Many of our members turn up and audition and then join the cast full time. It's wonderful to see them progress through the different shows and being something special to each performance."

The show will continue from tonight (Thursday) to Saturday. Tickets cost £10 with concessions available. See www.bhmtc.co.uk or call the box office on 0845 6588095.

New £6m football pitches proposed

FOOTBALL pitches could be created at two sites in Sandwell after council bosses revealed a plan to bid for millions of pounds of sports funding.

Sandwell Council wants to build 'football hubs' equipped with high-grade facilities in the north and south of the borough. The Parklife Football Hub programme, which is backed by Sport England, the Football Association and Premier League, aims to boost sport participation and improve facilities at grassroots level.

The cash-strapped authority would be able to apply for up to £6 million in funding for the hubs, which would include at least two 3G pitches and changing rooms.

Locations for the pitches have not yet been decided but it is planned for one to serve Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich and the other for Oldbury, Smethwick and Rowley Regis. The move would involve the formation of a new trust.

UKIP spokesman in call to put Crown mark back on glasses

CALLS have been made for the return of traditional Crown stamps on Britain's pint glasses – a decade after they began to disappear in favour of an EU-wide 'European Conformity' mark.

UKIP's Bill Etheridge, who represents the West Midlands in the European Parliament, believes a move back to the UK Government stamp, guaranteeing full and half-pint glasses are the correct size, could help revive Britain's glass-making sector.

An EU Measuring Instruments Di-

rective, which came into force in late 2006, meant manufacturers had to mark the letters 'CE' on newly-made pint pots, although existing Crown-stamped glasses could still be used in pubs.

Demands for the return of the Crown stamp follow similar calls for post-Brexit Britain to allow traders to ditch metric measures.

Control

Mr Etheridge, UKIP's defence spokesman and a member of the Campaign for Real Ale, said: "All drinkers remember the Crown mark, knowing it guaranteed them a full pint. Rein-

roduced gradually, as replacements, they are not a throwback to a nostalgic era, but a move to put us back in control of the production and specifications of our own pint."

Mr Etheridge, who is also a Dudley councillor for Sedgley, added: "Across the whole range of manufacturing we have to look at returning to our own systems of British Standards as we unravel ourselves from EU red tape. Any nostalgia should be to return to an era when British Standards set the agenda and were respected throughout the world. Once we are free to make our own trade deals again, they will be at the forefront of our sales pitch."



Bill Etheridge – British stamp

Fine to fund air ambulance

A NEW air ambulance will be taking to the region's skies following a £1 million grant.

Midlands Air Ambulance, based at RAF Cosford, will order the new craft after it was announced in the autumn statement that the charity would be given the money by the Government from the banking fines fund.

Hanna Sebright, chief executive for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, said: "The injection of funds via the banking fine comes as very welcome news at the charity as it will help further enhance our vitally important emergency service."

"The allocation has enabled us to place an order for an upgraded H145 helicopter, which will cost in total approximately £7 million."

The charity currently owns one helicopter and leases two further aircraft.

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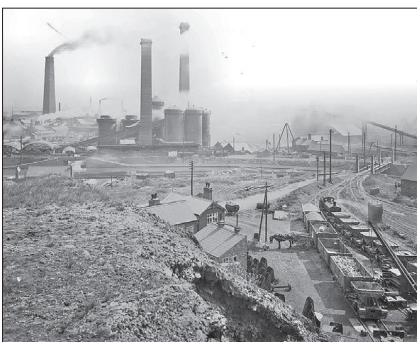
The Old Deanery, which was replaced in the 1930s by Wolverhampton Polytechnic



Sedgley's Bullring, seen during the early 20th century



Digitalising glass negatives, volunteer Steve Martin, at Wolverhampton City Archives



Producing steel at Hickman Works, Springvale, Bilston



The iconic curved building which was the Victoria Hotel, now The Britannia Hotel situated in Lichfield Street

Steve brings pictures of city into the digital age

A VAST collection of some of the oldest photographs of Wolverhampton and surrounding areas in existence is being computerised for the new digital generation.

More than 2,000 glass negatives, some more than 120 years old, are being converted to the new technology – and all by one man, prompted by his combined love of history and his adopted city.

Steve Martin spends a couple of days a week at the Wolverhampton Archives in Waterloo Road hunched over the dusty glass plates – the predecessor of photographic film – and is now more than halfway through the project.

The images include an early Wolves match, showing the players in knee breeches, with the spectators watching from a grassy bank just yards from the pitch.

Another shows a ward in the vast King Edward VII Memorial Wing which was added to the overcrowded Wolverhampton and Staffordshire

MEMORY LANE

By Marion Brennan

General Hospital, later renamed the Royal Hospital, in 1923.

Some of the glass plates are so big he has had to process them in three or four sections and 'stitch' them together.

Hardly any of the photographs are identified or dated but help has been at hand from the Wolverhampton Literary & Scientific Society whose members have been assisting by posting the images on its Facebook page, and inviting suggestions.

Software

"We have no idea of the sources," said Mr Martin, who lives off Tettenhall Road. "The negatives have not been catalogued, and we don't know how long they have been there."

The keen photographer volunteered himself for the task and uses his own equipment to scan the images, including a software programme to stitch the bigger images together. A native Lon-

doner, he has lived in Wolverhampton for 28 years and enjoys great views of the city from his 10th floor flat, but says: "I wish I'd known Wolverhampton in those days." The archives' old-fashioned negatives date from the late 1800s, with many of the First world War period, and include some from the 1950s.

The sources of some of the negatives is known, with many of the church interiors bearing the stamp of professional photographer Bennett Clark while others came from individuals and newspapers.

He says: "The collection is a hotch-potch of images but together they provide a rich photographic tapestry of how Wolverhampton used to look."

* The Chronicle's sister newspaper, the Express & Star is working with Wolverhampton Archives and the University of Wolverhampton to digitise its collection of historic photographs. The project secured £59,000 in Heritage Lottery Fund support to develop plans to create a free to use website. To find out more go to: <https://twitter.com/esphotoarchive> or www.facebook.com/photoarchivebid/



The site of the Royal London Building pre-1900



A Wolves match taking place at the Molineux in the 1890s, with a supporters stand in the distance

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Ambitious Manor House restoration is approved

AMBITIOUS plans to invest more than £2.5 million in a historic landmark building have won approval from council leaders.

Sandwell Council is applying for money from the Heritage Lottery Fund so it can restore the timber-framed Grade I Manor House in Stone Cross which dates back to the 13th century.

Councillors have given the go-ahead to apply for funding which, if successful, will improve access to more of the historic house, remove unsympathetic extensions, correct patched and temporary repairs and enhance the grounds.

Councillor Richard Marshall, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for leisure, said: "Our aim is to restore and improve the Manor House so it can take its justifiable place as one of the most significant heritage buildings in the West Midlands."

Structure

A significant programme of physical works is proposed in line with the recommendations of the 2011 Conservation Plan as part of the work to the building if the bid is successful.

A report before councillors outlines a programme of repairs to the physical structure of the building including the removal of inappropriate 20th century materials and repairs in line with current best practice as specified in the Conservation Plan.

Officers want to improve the physical access around the building through alterations in floor levels, re-opening historic doorways and new improved staircases and upper floor access.

And they want to remove the poor quality extensions to the building dating back to the days when it was used as a pub in the 1960s as well as provide new facilities including a classroom and toilets in adjacent buildings.

Officers say a successful bid would also enable further archaeological investigations in significant parts of the



£2.5 million investment – The Manor House, at Hall Green Road, West Bromwich

building, particularly the chapel range and the newly-discovered 15th century bakery.

They would also carry out a range of hard landscaping improvements including developing dedicated pedestrian access from Hall Green Road, re-laying and re-organising the car park and developing part of the existing car park as a hard-surfaced events area.

Councillor Marshall added: "If we get funding, then the capital works will enable more and better events at

the Manor House and make it a quality asset in the heart of the community."

Council officers will now seek a stage-one pass for development funding of £142,000 as part of an overall capital project with a total value of £2,500,000 with 80 per cent support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the 20 per cent from Sandwell Council.

The development phase is estimated at costing £142,000 with a council contribution of £28,400.

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Scents to to sweeten the sharp winter air

Blow the January blues away with some deliciously scented winter plants. Hannah Stephenson picks a variety that pack a gloriously perfumed punch

THERE may be few reasons to venture into the garden at this time of year, but scent is one of them.

The rich, heady perfume of certain winter-flowering shrubs can blow away the cobwebs and brush off the worst of the winter blues.

Just inhaling the delicious fragrance of shrubs like mahonia, Christmas box (*Sarcococca confusa*) and *Viburnum x bodnantense* as you view the garden should shake off any reluctance you might have harboured about venturing outdoors in the first place.

Add to that the bare-branched stems and light yellow, beautifully-perfumed flowers of wintersweet, the sulphur yellow flowers along the bare spreading branches of witch hazel and the strong-scented clusters of white flowers which appear on shrubby honeysuckle in winter, and your olfactory senses should be in their element.

Of course, you don't want one perfume to overshadow another, and indeed, scented shrubs require a variety of conditions and space, but here's a few of the best that will provide scent, colour and form:

Shrubby honeysuckle (*Lonicera x purpusii*)

Not a bit like a regular honeysuckle, but a close cousin nevertheless, this neat rounded bush grows to 2m x 2m and is covered in winter with clusters of strongly scented, white flowers.

Grow it in any good garden soil in sun or light shade. Trim the flowered stems back to a sideshoot each year once the flowers are over to keep a good shape.

Mahonia x media 'Charity'

This upright plant, which grows 2m high and 1m wide, has tooth-edged, leathery evergreen leaves and spikes of brilliant yellow scented flowers that smell a bit like lily of the valley in winter.

It should be planted in light shade with a little shelter, so is ideally placed with others in a large border.

Cut off some of the branches bearing flowers for indoor decorations, and if the shrub becomes leggy, cut it back hard after flowering.

Witch hazel (*Hamamelis mollis* 'Pallida')

Significant spidery-shaped sulphur-yellow flowers appear along its spreading branches and can be in flower from autumn through to spring in a sheltered spot, or in a mild winter.

The golden colour of the leaves in autumn is also worth noting. Another good one is *H. x intermedia* 'Arnold Promise', which produces wonderfully scented yellow flowers.

Witch hazels are great for urban gardens as their leafless branches in winter cast no shade and they are also pretty compact.

Wintersweet (*sarcococca confusa*)

These tough evergreen shrubs are invaluable in the garden in winter, their dense forms covered in glossy, dark green leaves, bearing clusters of white flowers followed by round, glossy berries.

But their best asset is their scent, a sweet, powerful fragrance which carries a surprising distance, even on the coldest day.

If you want scent indoors, just cut a few stems and they will fill a room with rich fragrance. Grow them with other winter-flowering plants such as *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn' and *Helleborus niger*, or as an informal hedge.

Daphne bholua

The pretty pinky-purple and white flowers on this medium-sized evergreen shrub pack a perfumed punch and brighten up any shady border in winter. It's compact by nature, but will reach a maximum height of 2.5m and spread 1.5m in 10 years if you plant it in fertile, humus-rich soil that won't dry out too much in summer.

Of course, there are also smaller plants that will give you fragrance in winter, such as the pint-sized *Crocus sieberi* 'Bowles's White', with its pure white flowers and gold throats, or the snowdrop, *Galanthus magnet*, and the *Ipheion* 'Alberto Castillo', a member of the onion family that grows to just 18cm, its white scented star-shaped flowers facing the sky.

Grow them near the patio door to enjoy the best of the fragrance.



Christmas rose, *Helleborus niger*, has delicate flowers

Brightening the scene with delicate blooms

BEST OF THE BUNCH – Helleborus

IT may be known as the Christmas rose, but the helleborus generally blooms in January, its delicate-looking saucer-shaped blooms brightening the scene in shades of white, pink or purple.

The best place for it is the front of the border where nearby evergreen shrubs will protect it from winter winds and its flowers are best displayed, emerging between January and March, depending on the type. *H. niger* grows to around 45cm producing white flowers with central golden stamens. The Lenten rose blooms later, between February and April, producing white, pink or purple flowers. Dig in compost and leaf mould before planting, watch out for slugs in spring and water in dry weather.

GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT – Growing onions from sets

JANUARY is a good time to look out for onion sets in garden centres if you want to grow your own. They are much easier than seeds and low-maintenance once you've started them off.

Look out for the small garden bulbs and store them in a dry place ready for planting in March.

Dig over the ground in winter, adding compost and firm the surface before planting. Plant sets 10cm (4in) apart in mid-March to mid-April, with the tips just showing, firming soil around the sets. Protect them from birds with netting and keep them weed-free. They should be ready for lifting between July and September. Good varieties include 'Rumba' and 'Sturon'.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

1. Prepare celery trenches, digging in plenty of organic matter.
2. Cover areas still to be dug with a sheet of polythene to keep off rain and snow.
3. If your seed and potting compost is kept in a cold place, bring it into the greenhouse several days before use to warm it up to the glasshouse temperature.
4. Check stakes and ties on newly planted trees, making sure they are not rubbing.
5. Take root cuttings from oriental poppies, verbascum, *Primula denticulata*, *Phlox paniculata*, rhus and other plants.
6. Enrich soil with compost where beans are to be grown.
7. Wash and sterilise pots and seed trays.

Holidays that indulge a passion for gardens

By Hannah Stephenson

NEW Year is the time when we think about booking our holidays – and for the green-fingered, that might include a garden visit or even a garden-themed break.

Some tour operators, including Saga, have introduced new special interest holidays into their 2017 product range.

"Over the past couple of years, we have really seen a surge in demand for our horticultural programme," says Saga's special interest holiday creator Tremaine Moore.

"For garden lovers, I think the attraction is the mix of visiting outstanding gardens combined with the opportunity to see the local wild flora, especially when it comes to the trips overseas."

Among Saga's new range is a tour in September to the Western Cape in South Africa, including wild flora visits and entrance to some of the country's most famous gardens. It also has three new UK holidays in summer, taking in some prestigious gardens including RHS Wisley, Sheffield Botanical Gardens and Renishaw (www.saga.co.uk).

New destination itineraries for RHS Garden Holidays include Marrakech and Flowers of the Atlas, visiting some of the exciting new gardens in Morocco, including that of Tom Stuart-Smith; Oregon: In the Footsteps of David Douglas holiday, following the route of the famous Scots botanist; and Burle Marx Gardens of Rio & Brazil's Natural Wonders which includes exclusive visits to some of the private gardens designed by the celebrated Brazilian landscape architect.

The society is also launching a holiday taking in the new RHS Chatsworth Flower Show, plus breaks featuring private gardens of East Anglia and private gardens of Guernsey (020 3735 1855, rhsgardenholidays.com).

But if you just want to do your own thing, here are four of the best gardens around the world to explore at your leisure:

Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, Cape Town (www.sanbi.org)

Now part of a UNESCO World Heritage site, these stunning gardens, only 13km from Cape Town, provide a marvellous showcase for South Africa's indigenous flora, with more than 7,000 plant species, including the king protea (South Africa's national flower), fynbos, agapanthus and a rich collection of bulbs, alpines and ferns.

Best time to visit: If you want to see proteas in full bloom, go in South Africa's winter - June, July and August. To see the fynbos at its best and the most plants in flower, go from the end of winter, spring or early summer (Aug-Nov)

Powerscourt Gardens, Enniskerry, County Wicklow, Ireland (powerscourt.com)

The gardens and grand Palladian villa at Powerscourt, south of Dublin, were designed in the 18th century and punctuate 47 acres of formal walled gardens and shaded ponds. The grounds, waterfalls, parks, gar-



Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, in Cape Town, is one of the top destinations for garden-loving holidaymakers



Cherry blossom at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, in New York



The ornate Villa d'Este Park in Tivoli, Lazio, Italy

den pavilions, and fine tree-lined arbors were suggested by the Italian Renaissance and the great estates and gardens of France and Germany. Cascading terraces and formal landscapes are planned with carefully designed walks that are framed by the gentle beauty of the Wicklow Mountains.

Best time to visit: April to August
Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York (www.bbg.org)

If you're visiting the Big Apple in 2017, take time out from the hubbub of the city to explore this 52-acre garden, home to thousands of plants and trees, as well as a

Japanese garden where river turtles swim alongside a Shinto shrine. Among the showstopping highlights are the blooming cherry trees, a gift from Japan, which are celebrated in Sakura Matsuri, the Cherry Blossom Festival.

Best time to visit: April or May when the cherry blossom is at its peak

Villa d'Este, Tivoli, Italy (www.vil-ladestetivoli.info)

This hugely ornate and awe-inspiring Italian Renaissance garden is awash with theatrical fountains and magnificent statues and is listed as one of Italy's major

historical/artistic sites. It all began when a Renaissance cardinal decided to turn a dilapidated Benedictine monastery into a beautiful villa, embellished with gardens awash with fountains, including the Fontana del Bicchierone, where water spills from a large shell-shaped basin, and The Avenue of the Hundred Fountains, which features animal heads, lilies, a small boat and basins which all spurt water.

Best time to visit: In summer, when escaping the heat from Rome, visitors should enjoy the cool combination of garden shade and cold running water

Bill could battle it out for UKIP at by-election

WEST Midlands MEP Bill Etheridge has put himself forward as UKIP's potential candidate for the upcoming Stoke-on-Trent Central by-election. The seat has become vacant after Labour's Tristram Hunt stood down to take over as director at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. UKIP has vowed to go all out to win

the seat after it polled 22.7 per cent of the vote in the 2015 general election. Mr Etheridge, who is also a Sedgely councillor on Dudley Council, said UKIP leader Paul Nuttall was 'strongly considering' standing. But he added: "If Paul decides against it there are some people who are pretty high up in the party who

think it should be me. I've put my name forward and we'll just have to see what happens." Mr Etheridge, who was sent by Mr Nuttall to the Potteries to launch the party's campaign, says his party is in 'pole position' to take the seat. He added: "The people there voted in huge numbers to leave the EU."

Springboard events for elderly bounce back after closure

ACTIVITY sessions for the elderly have bounced back to life following funding cuts in Dudley.

The closure of the popular Age UK Springboard Activity centre, left hundreds of elderly residents without a place to go at the end of last year. It was axed after funding was pulled by the Big Lottery and Dudley Council. Now former employee Sandy Jones has set up 'Bounce Back to health & happiness' – with her own money. Bounce Back opened its doors for the first time last week and saw dozens arrive to see what the new venture had to offer. A variety of activities, courses, trips and social events for people aged 50 and over in the Black Country will be on offer four days a week at the same prices as before – £2.50 to £5 per session. It operates from St Paul's, in Hawbush Road, Brierley Hill and Quarry Bank Community Centre. Almost all of the activities, classes, staff, volunteers and the 700 members have moved over to Bounce Back.

Alternative

Sandy Jones, the new managing director, said: "Most of the people who attended the old centre are over the moon that we have been able to provide an alternative for them.

"Our oldest person was a hundred years old in the summer and for some of them, we were the only personal contact they had all week.

"I would have been willing to give up my redundancy pay to enable them to avoid loneliness and isolation."

As part of the new services there will be a 'men's morning' where the men can play cards, dominoes, and have a chat.

Bosses are also urging for anyone to come forward with ideas for alternative classes. Before its closure, Age UK Springboard looked after more than 700 people by holding weekly activities including exercise classes and ballroom dancing. They had three staff and around 40 volunteers.

Due to the funding cuts, it was announced that the centre would not be able to continue after 13 years.

More than 250 people attended a farewell party for the centre at the Cophorne Hotel in December.

For further information on the 'Bounce Back' provision call 07491 312825 or email bounceback2017@hotmail.com for costs and details.

Business links bring airline back to Brum

AIRLINE bmi regional has returned to Birmingham for the first time in more than two years.

It is launching flights to Nuremberg in Germany, Gothenburg in Sweden and Graz in Austria.

One aircraft will be based at Birmingham with the Graz flights starting next month. Services to Nuremberg and Gothenburg start in May.

It comes after bmi regional pulled out of Birmingham in 2014 after briefly operating services to Lyon, Toulouse, Gothenburg and Billund.

Jochen Schnadt, chief

commercial officer from bmi regional, said: "We are delighted to be introducing flights from Birmingham as part of our ongoing growth strategy to connect key business regions. The Midlands is a powerhouse for business and industry in the UK and arguably the real home of the Made in Britain label. "Having frequent connections to other European business centres is therefore critical for the region. Given this strong business affinity, we believe our new Graz, Nuremberg and Gothenburg routes will prove very popular with business customers."

Thomas Dudley wins foundry safety award

THE award-winning foundry division of Thomas Dudley has scooped a Safety and Health Foundry Targets Initiative award.

The 2016 award was given to the Dudley-based group's foundry division due to its staff working proactively as a team within time constraints, identifying any issues and implementing a 'five step solution' to obtain a record-breaking result within the electric furnace melting deck area.

Dave Oddy, metal melt manager, said: "We're extremely pleased to see our hard work was successful. It was important to embrace

selves on railways. They also made 80 life-saving interventions.

In a bid to help officers, rail pastors – an initiative from the Ascension Trust made up of volunteers from local churches – now patrol platforms and trains on the line between Stourbridge and Birmingham Snow Hill, looking out for distressed people. They are the fifth dedicated rail pastor team in the country, taking the number of volunteers on the network to around 100.

Inspector Dave Rams, from British Transport Police in Birmingham, said: "We look forward to working with the pastors."

Rail pastor bid to save lives



Rail pastor church volunteers join officers at Stourbridge Junction

A PROJECT to save lives on railways in the West Midlands was launched on the same day dubbed by many as the most depressing day of the year.

Blue Monday (January 16) is described as the unhappiest date on the calendar with people are left facing dark mornings, post-Christmas debts and a month of restraint after over-indulgence during the festive period.

In 2016, officers in the West Midlands attended more than 460 mental health incidents, 21 suspected suicides and six people believed to have deliberately harmed them-

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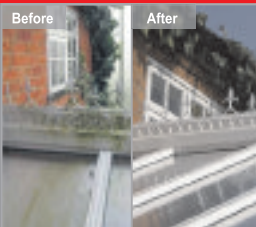
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Taylor and the boys
are back – Page 25



Glenn Hughes

See Page 25



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Wednesday, 8pm
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
Birmingham rapper Juice Aleem (pictured), formerly of hip-hop trio New Flesh, joins the Anglo-French imaginary soundtrack quartet. Support from electronic outfit Delta Autumn. Visit bit.ly/primitivelondononftjuicealeem

Brendan Cole - All Night Long



Thursday (Jan 26), 7.30pm
Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton
The Strictly Come Dancing professional brings his latest choreographed spectacular out on tour with lots of dancers plus a band and singers on stage. Visit www.grandtheatre.co.uk



The US rockers hope their fans will enjoy A Day To Remember at their concert in Birmingham

This band will be a name to remember

IF the musical genre metalcore is a mystery to you, then Florida's A Day To Remember may be the biggest band you've never heard of.

But this pop-punk outfit from Ocala have become massive Stateside since releasing their debut *And Their Name Was Treason* in 2005.

They've sold more than a million units, racked up over 400 million Spotify streams and 500 million YouTube views, garnered two gold-selling albums and singles (and one silver album in the UK) and sold out entire continental tours (including their own curated Self Help Festival). They have amassed a global fanbase whose members number in the millions.

All of which explains why Rolling Stone called them "An Artist You Need To Know."

On Wednesday they play the Barclaycard Arena in Birmingham with support from fellow Florida rockers New Found Glory, Wrexham pop-punkers Neck Deep and Kent emo outfit Moose Blood.

For new album *Bad Vibrations*, the quintet of vocalist Jeremy McKinnon, guitarists Kevin Skaff and Neil Westfall, bassist Joshua Woodard and drummer Alex Shelnutt switched gears and headed for uncharted territory. Their path included a loose and much more collaborative songwriting process, one that also saw them recording for the first time with producers Bill Stevenson (Descendents, Black Flag) and Jason Livermore (Rise Against, NOFX).

Although the album is being released on the band's own ADTR Records (like 2013's *Common Courtesy*), this record marks their first distribution deal with Epitaph and is the first time they've worked with Grammy winner Andy Wallace (Foo Fighters, Slayer).

"We completely changed the way we wrote, recorded and mixed this album," says vocalist McKinnon. "It was one of the most unique recording experiences we've ever had."

"We rented a cabin in the Colorado mountains and just wrote with the five of us together in a room, which was the polar

opposite of the last three albums we've made. We just let things happen organically and in the moment."

"I think it forever changed the way we make music. And working with Bill was an awesome experience. He was a bit hard to read at first, so I think we subconsciously pushed ourselves harder to try to impress him. As a result, we gave this album everything we had."

Kinetic

Recorded at Stevenson's Fort Collins-based Blasting Room Studios, *Bad Vibrations* channels the kinetic energy that found A Day To Remember named "The Best Live Band Of 2015" by Alternative Press.

The band decided to forgo digitally driven production and focus on live recording. "These days it seems like a lot of heavy sounding music is heading more and more in a digital direction," says McKinnon. "That's not necessarily a bad thing but we wanted to go the opposite way and make something that's aggressive but has more of a natural flow and feel to it."

Ultimately, McKinnon says that this particular album-making process breathed new life into the band. He adds: "Breaking out of our comfort zone and working in a less controlled way, we ended up making something that feels good to everyone, and we can't wait to go out and tour on it."

By powering *Bad Vibrations* with so much raw passion, A Day To Remember ultimately deliver some of their most emotionally intense material to date.

"I'm singing about the things that are frustrating me," says McKinnon. "But at some point there's an arc within the song. It's almost like I'm giving advice to another person about whatever I'm struggling with, but I think I'm really just trying to give that advice to myself."

The band tackles duplicity and deception (on the frenzied 'Same About You'), the destructive nature of judgmental behaviour (on 'Justified'), a track shot through with soaring harmonies and sprawling guitar work, addiction (on the darkly charged 'Reassemble'), and friendship poisoned by unchecked ego (on 'Bullfight', a track with a classic-punk chorus).



Energetic frontman Jeremy McKinnon



McKinnon delivers emotional material in *Bad Vibrations*

Check out listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

The Pretty Reckless return with album number three



New York rock band The Pretty Reckless, fronted by Taylor Momsen, are back with recent album *Who You Selling For* and a Birmingham gig

AMERICAN rock band The Pretty Reckless, fronted by former Gossip Girl actress Taylor Momsen, are in concert in Birmingham tomorrow night (Friday), following the release of third studio album *Who You Selling For*.

Released in October, that album was the follow-up to *Going to Hell*, which included one of the biggest rock songs of 2014, *Heaven Knows*.

The latest album features songs with bluesy undertones, written by singer-guitarist Momsen and lead guitarist Ben Phillips, and is pro-

duced by the band's longtime collaborator Kato Khandwala, who has also worked with Blondie, Paramore and My Chemical Romance.

Formed in 2009, The Pretty Reckless released their debut album *Light Me Up* in 2010 scoring legions of fans worldwide, but it was their second album *Going to Hell* that really established the band, and Momsen as a creditable rock singer as well as actress and model.

Despite feeling the physical and emotional demands from their epic two-year tour support-

ing *Going to Hell*, Momsen and Phillips jumped right into writing the songs for the new album.

"We had so much we wanted to say, it was like shaking a can of soda on tour and then when we started writing we cracked the seal," says Momsen. "The touring life is very isolating. You look at the world through a bus or airplane window. But music is the healing factor. It saved us - again."

The Pretty Reckless are at Birmingham's O2 Institute, Digbeth, doors open 6.30pm.

Voice of rock at the Robin

CANNOCK rock star Glenn Hughes has spoken of his excitement at coming back to the UK this month for a tour.

The legendary singer and bassist, who is currently in the studio in LA recording a new studio album with rock supergroup Black Country Communion, has released an official statement to his fans about touring the UK this month.

He cancelled a similar tour which was set to take place last November just weeks before it started after a fall-out with support band Living Colour, who removed themselves from the bill at short notice.

Hughes will return to the Black Country on Monday night for a show at Bilston's Robin 2.

The California-based rocker said: "I'm thrilled to be coming over to tour the UK and Europe this month and February."

"My band will now be a four piece. On guitar is Søren Andersen, on drums Pontus Engborg, and on keyboards Jay Boe. Song selections will be a mix from my new album *Resonate*, and from my well of historic songs through the decades.

"This tour is all about rock and what it means to us all, including my band, and to my fans and friends. Let's get 2017 going with a killer night for rock lovers, movers and shakers. See you down the front."

Previously Hughes has fronted Deep Purple, Trapeze and more recently supergroup Black Country Communion. He was also the voice of The KLF's hit *What Time Is Love?*

Hughes will be supported by Walsall band Stone Broken. Tickets cost £22.50 in advance or £24.50 on the door. Contact 01902 401 211 or visit www.therobin.co.uk

Stray are celebrating 50 years together with gig

ROCK four-piece Stray are celebrating 50 years together with a gig at the Robin 2 in Bilston on Sunday.

Four school friends formed the group in London in 1966, releasing their first album in 1970 and have been performing ever since. Still led by guitarist Del Bromham, the band play a melodic mix of hard rock and heavy blues.

The Superskas play the venue tomorrow (Friday), there is a charity gig by The Busby Babes on Saturday and Glenn Hughes plays on Monday (see above). On Tuesday there is blues from Lil' Jimmy Reed, and more blues from Eric Sardinas on Wednesday, and then its jump 'n' jive 1940s and '50s R&B from King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys, supported by Ricky Cool and The In Crowd, at the Mount Pleasant venue on Thursday.

Tributes taking over with feast of nostalgia

THE New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham is preparing for soundalikes next weekend when it holds three consecutive tribute concerts, starting on Thursday with The Bowie Experience.

The two-hour concert celebrates the music of David Bowie, who would have been 70 last week if not for his death a year ago. The band is fronted by Laurence Knight in costume in several Bowie guises.

On January 27 Someone Like You features the Adele songbook, performed in concert by Kate Markham. The Carpenters Story on January 28 features Claire Furlley as Karen Carpenter, the velvet-voiced 1970s singer who performed in The Carpenters with her brother Richard.

Also on Saturday, January 28, the Robin 2 in Bilston presents the ultimate 70s night out with Bootleg Abba and Bee Gees Fever.

Orchestra play score alongside Blood epic

THE 50-piece London Contemporary Orchestra will be performing the score by Jonny Greenwood for Oscar-winning movie *There Will Be Blood* live alongside a screening of the epic at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on Sunday, February 5.

The soundtrack, by the Oxford-born guitarist and keyboardist from acclaimed experimental rock band Radiohead, added to the success of director Paul Thomas Anderson's drama set during the California oil boom of the early 1900s.

Described as a 'masterpiece' by some critics, the film won Academy Awards for actor Daniel Day-Lewis and cinematographer Robert Elswitt.

Tickets cost from £28 to £48 for the 7pm performance. See www.thsh.co.uk or call 0121 780 4949.

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Sat 11 Jan	The Story of The Bee Gees.....	£89
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Sat 18 Feb	Blood Brothers & Liverpool Special.....	£99
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NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

CHOICE



Jennifer Hudson

The Voice UK (TV, 8pm)
The competition forges ahead as the third round of blind auditions arrives. Coaches Will.i.am, Tom Jones, Jennifer Hudson and Gavin Rossdale have already started to fill spaces on their teams, and with their initial acts now decided, chances are that the coaches will now start to clash over claiming the most exceptional singers to fill their rosters. When this happens, the competition turns on its head, with the coaches now competing against each other to explain why they would be the perfect mentor for the budding music stars. Emma Willis is on hosting duties, and goes backstage with the contestants' families.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** The Best Dishes Ever. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Live Snooker: The Masters. The opening semi-final. **4.30** Final Score. **5.10** BBC News. **5.20** Regional Programme. **5.30** Who Dares Wins. **6.10** **Pointless Celebrities.** TV experts Kieran Long, Piers Taylor, Martin Roberts, Amanda Lamb, Vicki Butler-Henderson, Tiff Needell, John Hammond and Laura Tobin compete in the unorthodox quiz show. **7.00** **Let It Shine.** The nationwide talent hunt continues, as Mel Giedroyc and Graham Norton host a third round of auditions in Manchester. More hopeful stars take part in solo auditions in front of judges Gary Barlow, Dannii Minogue, Martin Kemp and Amber Riley, who are each afforded a chance to rate each act out of five stars. As ever, the boys taking to the stage must achieve 15 stars or more to remain in the running to claim a place in Let It Shine's five-strong headline act. **8.25** **Casualty.** Iain faces an unexpected reunion with his estranged younger sister Gem, a young offender whose supervisor is admitted to the ED after she is struck over the head with a wok. **9.15** **Taboo.** James Delaney finds himself alone with the mysterious Dr Dumbarton, and ends up discovering he has an unlikely ally. However, with enemies lurking in every corner of London society, James realises Dumbarton's friendship will be but the first in a series of perilous affiliations he will need to make if he is to complete his mission – or avoid meeting an untimely fate. As he works to prevent further attempts on his life, James realises the only way to slip the gaze of his enemies is to give them a more pliable target to destroy in his place. Drama, starring Tom Hardy. **10.10** **BBC News:** Weather: National Lottery Update. **10.30** **Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights. **11.55** **The NFL Show.** Mark Chapman looks ahead to the Conference Championship games. **12.25** **Film:** Paycheck. (2003) **2.20** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.25** BBC News.

BBC2

6.30 Film: Mary of Scotland. (1936) John Ford's historical drama chronicling the turbulent reign of Mary, Queen of Scots, and her power struggle with Queen Elizabeth I. Katharine Hepburn stars. **8.30 Film:** I Know Where I'm Going! (1945) A woman sets out to marry for money but falls for a dashing but penniless naval officer instead. Powell and Pressburger's romantic drama, starring Wendy Hiller and Roger Livesey. **10.00** Secret Britain. (R) **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** Exploring China: A Culinary Adventure. (R) **1.00** Debbie Reynolds: Talking Pictures. **1.30 Film:** Bundle of Joy. (1956) Musical comedy, starring Debbie Reynolds as a salesgirl who finds an abandoned baby which everyone assumes is hers. With Eddie Fisher. **3.05** Tennis: Australian Open Highlights. **4.30** Live Snooker: The Masters. Hazel Irvine presents concluding coverage of the opening semi-final, played over the best of 11 frames on day six at Alexandra Palace in London. **5.30** Only Connect. (R) **6.00** **Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise.** The mountains and forests of Northern Thailand, an area that is home to a variety of wildlife, leading to unusual partnerships developing between animals and people. Last in the series. (R) **7.00** **Live Snooker: The Masters.** Hazel Irvine presents coverage of the second semi-final, played over the best of 11 frames on day six at Alexandra Palace in London. Despite being an invitational event, this tournament is considered one of the more prestigious on the snooker calendar, and with the winner set to claim a cheque for £200,000, both of the players in this contest will be eager to progress to tomorrow's final. With commentary and analysis by Steve Davis, Ken Doherty, Stephen Hendry, John Parrott, Dennis Taylor and John Virgo. **10.30 Film: Looper.** (2012) A hitman employed to kill people who have been sent back in time finds his latest target is his future self. Sci-fi thriller, with Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Bruce Willis. **12.20** Snooker: The Masters – Extra. Hazel Irvine presents extended highlights of the opening semi-final in this year's tournament, played over the best of 11 frames on day six at Alexandra Palace in London. **2.20** This is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Sooty. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Super 4. (R) **7.15** Oddbods. (R) **7.20** Oddbods. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Bear Grylls Survival School. **9.05** Scrambled!: Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Rebound. (R) **10.25** Guess This House. (R) **11.25** Judge Rinder. (R) **12.30** ITV News: Weather. **12.35** River Monsters. (R) **1.05** Big Star's Little Star. (R) **2.05** Tipping Point. (R) **3.05** The Chase. (R) **4.05** Dance Dance Dance. (R) **5.35** Regional Programme. **5.45** ITV News: Weather. **6.00** **You've Been Framed! and Fearless.** Harry Hill showcases hilarious white-knuckle hijinks from the show's archive, all of which reveal that danger could lurk in even the most unlikely of places. **7.00** **Ninja Warrior UK.** Competitors from across the nation test their strength, speed and courage in this obstacle-course challenge, hosted by Ben Shephard, Rochelle Humes and Chris Kamara. Those who make it to the end of the adrenaline-fuelled mission face one final task – scaling the heights of a tower named Mount Midoriyama – as they battle it out for the title of Ninja Warrior UK. **8.00** **The Voice UK.** Emma Willis presents the third round of blind auditions, with coaches Will.i.am, Tom Jones, Jennifer Hudson and Gavin Rossdale aiming to bolster their teams further. **9.30** **Through the Keyhole.** Marvin Humes, Kate Garraway and Jimmy Carr are challenged to discover the identities of three more mystery celebrities, using only clues found in their homes. Hosted by Keith Lemon. **10.30** **ITV News:** Weather. **10.45** **Film: I Am Legend.** (2007) A Manhattan-based scientist tries to find a cure for a viral plague that has turned all other humans into vampire-like creatures. Sci-fi thriller, with Will Smith. **12.30** Jackpot247. **3.00** Who's Doing the Dishes? (R) **3.30** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.20 The King of Queens. (R) **6.45** The King of Queens. (R) **7.10** The King of Queens. (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **9.55** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.20** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.50** The Simpsons. (R) **11.20** The Simpsons. (R) **11.50** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **12.55** Come Dine with Me. (R) **1.25** Come Dine with Me. (R) **1.55** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.30** Come Dine with Me. (R) **3.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **3.30** A Place in the Sun: Summer Sun. (R) **4.15** Location, Location, Location. (R) **4.20** Grand Designs. (R) **6.15** **Channel 4 News.** **6.40** **Film: Snow White & the Huntsman.** (2012) An evil queen learns that her reign will last for ever if she kills a princess, so sends a renowned warrior to find and murder her. However, he comes to realise his mistress's evil ways, and instead trains his intended victim to fight so they can bring the tyrant's rule to an end. Fantasy adventure, with Kristen Stewart, Chris Hemsworth and Charlize Theron. **9.00** **Film: The Other Woman.** (2014) Premiere. A woman is devastated to learn her boyfriend is actually married, but when she meets his wife, they quickly become friends. When they discover he has a third secret lover, they decide to join forces and teach him a lesson. Comedy, starring Cameron Diaz, Leslie Mann, Kate Upton and Nikolaj Coster-Waldau. **11.10** **Film: The Watch.** (2012) A supermarket manager forms a neighbourhood watch group to patrol his community, but stumbles on an alien invasion. Sci-fi comedy, starring Ben Stiller and Vince Vaughn. **1.00** **Hollyoaks.** Omnibus. Esther still cannot remember anything from the shooting, and Lisa and Mac are left feeling guilty about having sex in the cellar while Nathan was being attacked. **3.10** **The Secret Life of 6 Year Olds.** The documentary moves on to a new, older group. (R) **4.00** Shipping Wars UK. Shahbaz runs into trouble in France when his van makes a strange noise. (R) **4.40** Kirstie's Fill Your House for Free. Transforming a living room, hall and bedroom. (R) **4.55** Location, Location, Location. An update on a property hunt in Aberdeen. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **8.00** Big Bash Cricket. **11.35** **Film:** Escape to Victory. (1981) **1.50** Police Interceptors: Take Down. (R) **2.20** The Yorkshire Vet. (R) **3.20** The Yorkshire Vet. (R) **4.15** The Yorkshire Vet. (R) **5.15** The Yorkshire Vet. (R) **6.15** **NCIS: Los Angeles.** The team uncovers an alliance between al-Qaeda and a Mexican drug cartel when a shoot-out at a pawn shop is investigated. **7.05** **NCIS: Los Angeles.** Hetty enlists the help of a former colleague when an ex-Navy intelligence officer is murdered, but things go awry when her old friend threatens to kill her. The team races to save Hetty and expose her one-time workmate as having lied to the victim in order to make money from a seemingly charitable venture. **8.00** **NCIS.** A US Marine is found murdered in Quantico, mere hours after calling Gibbs to discuss a possible case. In response, Bishop and McGee go undercover as a married couple to run surveillance on a lieutenant and his wife, who may be connected to the death. Starring Mark Harmon and Michael Weatherly. **8.55** **5 News Weekend.** **9.00** **Football on 5: The Championship.** George Riley and Lynsey Hipgrave introduce action from the latest fixtures, which included Queens Park Rangers v Fulham at Loftus Road, Derby County v Reading at Pride Park, and Barnsley v Leeds United at Oakwell. **10.00** **Football on 5: Goal Rush.** George Riley and Lynsey Hipgrave introduce all the goals from the latest matches in Leagues One and Two, including Southend United v Bolton Wanderers, and Blackpool v Yeovil Town. **10.30** **Celebrity Big Brother.** The ups and downs of life in the BB house as friendships and alliances are made, battle lines are drawn and arguments erupt. **11.35** **Lip Sync Battle UK: Katie Price vs Ben Fogle.** Melanie Brown and Professor Green present as reality star and author Katie Price and presenter and adventurer Ben Fogle go head to head lip-synching to hit songs. (R) **12.05** SuperCasino. **3.10** **Celebrity Big Brother.** (R) **4.00** **Celebrity Botched Up Bodies.** (R) **4.50** Divine Designs. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Patagonia with Huw Edwards **8.00** Treasures of the Indus **9.00** Lost Kingdoms of Central America **10.00** The Young Montalbano **11.40** Top of the Pops **12.55** Imagine – Sir Roderick Stewart: Can't Stop Me Now **2.20** Rod Stewart: Live at Hyde Park **3.20** Sounds of the 70s **3.50** Close
ITV2
11.15 Ninja Warrior UK **12.20** **Film:** Horrid Henry: The Movie (2011) **1.20** FYI Daily **1.25** **Film:** Horrid Henry: The Movie (2011) **2.10** **Film:** Space Jam (1996) **3.10** FYI Daily **3.15** **Film:** Space Jam (1996) **3.55** **Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **4.55** FYI Daily **5.00** **Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **5.45** **Film:** The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (2012) **6.45** FYI Daily **6.50** **Film:** The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (2012) **9.00** **Film:** Hellboy II: The Golden Army (2008) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05** **Film:** Hellboy II: The Golden Army (2008) **11.20** Family Guy **12.50** American Dad! **1.45** Dads **2.10** Safeworld **2.45** Rixton: The Hot Desk **2.55** Teleshopping
ITV3
2.50 Wycliffe **4.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **6.00** Midsomer Murders **8.00** Doc Martin **9.00** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis **1.00** Blue Murder **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping
ITV4
11.00 Pawn Stars **11.30** **Film:** Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol (1987) **12.30** FYI Daily **12.35** **Film:** Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol (1987) **1.20** Barcelona's European Glory **1.30** ITV Racing Live from Ascot. Coverage of today's race meetings. **4.00** **Film:** The Dam Busters (1954) **5.00** FYI Daily **5.05** **Film:** The Dam Busters (1954) **6.35** Pawn Stars **7.00** The Boxing Mavericks **8.00** Big Fight Live. Robbie Davies v Willie Limond. **11.00** **Film:** Jaws (1975) **12.05** FYI Daily **12.10** **Film:** Jaws (1975) **1.40** Hell on Wheels **2.35** World Cup Top Goalscorers **2.45** ITV4 Nightscreen
E4
3.00 Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.00** **Film:** The Addams Family (1991) **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** **Film:** Terminator Salvation (2009) **11.10** Gogglebox **1.10** Rude Tube: Rude Zoo **2.10** Rude Tube: Extreme Rides **3.05** Cheving Gum
Film4
11.00 The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951) **1.00** Flight of the Navigator (1986) **2.45** The Lost World (1960) **4.40** One Fine Day (1996) **6.50** The Time Traveler's Wife (2009) **9.00** Lone Survivor (2013)

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Too Close To Kill, Channel 5, 3.15pm

Two best friends go their separate ways for the first time when one gets into the most revered sorority on campus, but matters soon take a fatal turn when one of them is murdered. Thriller, starring Greer Grammer, Chloe Babcock and Steve Bacic. (2016)

TUESDAY

Stolen Child, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A couple who have tried unsuccessfully to conceive resort to adopting a baby from Eastern Europe. However, their newfound happiness is shattered when they discover the disturbing series of events that brought the child into their lives. Drama, starring Emmanuelle Vaugier and Corbin Bernsen. (2012)



Insidious, Friday, Channel 4, 12.50am

WEDNESDAY

The Others, Channel 4, 1.30am

A woman awaits the return of her husband from the Second World War while struggling to care for her son and daughter. Both children suffer a violent reaction when exposed to daylight, forcing her to keep much of their isolated home on the island of Jersey shrouded in gloom. When the pair claim to see strangers in the house, their terrified mother begins to suspect that the souls of the dead are stalking the halls. Period supernatural thriller, starring Nicole Kidman. (2001)

THURSDAY

Badge of Betrayal, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A woman discovers her supposedly dead son is still alive, his demise having been faked by her ex-husband as part of an elaborate plot to destroy her life. However, finding the evidence to prove her story turns out to be a difficult challenge. Thriller, starring Julie Benz and Matthew Kevin Anderson. (2014)

FRIDAY

Insidious, Channel 4, 12.50am

A family experience strange events in their house and become convinced it is haunted. However, after moving on, they find the dark forces have followed them and when their son mysteriously falls into a coma, they must find a way to get rid of the paranormal entities tormenting them. Horror, starring Patrick Wilson and Rose Byrne. (2010)

The stars are out to shine in the capital

It's January, the start of a new year, a time, perhaps, to look back at what happened during the previous 12 months.

That's certainly the case in the showbusiness world.

During the next few weeks, we'll be inundated with awards ceremonies. The Golden Globes have already taken place, Bafta's film event appears on February 12, with the Oscars happen a fortnight later.

But our focus, for now, will be on the National Television Awards (or NTAs, for short). They're a little bit special because they're voted for by the public, ie the audience sat at home watching programmes for pleasure, rather than stuffy critics who are paid for their opinions.

That fact also makes them mean more to the winners too – after all, if the fans have voted for them, then they must be doing something right.

The past 12 months have certainly been very special TV-wise, with lots of highlights to choose from – long gone are the days when viewers were left

bemoaning that there was nothing on the box tonight!

The Great British Bake Off proved to be hugely popular, and viewers were fixed to their screens as Candice Brown was crowned the winner. But it was a bittersweet moment as it was revealed that the 2016 run would be the last to appear on the BBC – controversially, it will make its debut on Channel 4 this year, without presenters Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins, and judge Mary Berry, although Paul Hollywood had opted to stick with the show.

Interestingly, the programme (Best Challenge Show), Mel and Sue (TV Presenter), and Mary (TV Judge) are all up for NTAs, but Paul is not...

While Mary faces fierce competition from fellow veteran Len Goodman, who has retired from Strictly Come Dancing, Mel and Sue must beat the mighty Ant and Dec if they're to triumph – and that's no mean feat.

One of the most hotly contested categories will be Drama Performance, where Cillian Murphy (Peaky Blinders), Jenna Coleman

(Victoria), Sarah Lancashire (Happy Valley) and recent Golden Globe winner Tom Hiddleston (The Night Manager) will vie for the title.

All of their series are also in the running for awards, in either the Drama or Period Drama sections.

Other big names and shows set to feature on the night are Cold Feet, Casualty, Coronation Street, David Walliams, Simon Cowell and Game of Thrones.

Dermot O'Leary will host the event live from London's O2 arena, while Queen of the Jungle Scarlett Moffatt takes charge of the ceremony's social media feeds, delivering all the latest backstage gossip in the process.

"I've never been to an awards ceremony before," says Scarlett. "I can't believe the first one I'm attending is as part of the actual NTA team working alongside Dermot, the master of live TV; it's going to be such an amazing experience."

"To top it off, my Dad gets to be my plus one and walk me down my first ever red carpet. What more can a girl ask for?"



The National Television Awards 2017, Wednesday, ITV, 7.30pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Winterwatch 2017

BBC2, 8pm

New series. Chris Packham, Michaela Strachan and Martin Hughes-Games return to RSPB Arne in Dorset as they present from their base on Poole Harbour, which is officially the most biodiverse region in the UK, with more species of animals and plants within 10 miles of Wareham than anywhere else in the country. Gillian Burke examines military pillboxes in Studland to explore the lives of hibernating butterflies in winter, while Martin tries to understand the harbour's appeal for waders, particularly avocets, and has an incredible revelation.

TUESDAY

Brainwashing Stacey

BBC1, 10.45pm

Stacey Dooley travels to southern California to meet Jeff White, an anti-abortion campaigner who runs a group entitled Survivors of the Abortion Holocaust. He's been arrested more than 100 times for leading public protests against pregnancy terminations, and runs so-called Survivors Pro-Life Training Camps, in which children from all over America are invited to take part in summer camps which, according to its website, aims to educate and equip young activists who are willing to be used by God to

defend those unjustly sentenced to death. Dooley joins some of the youngsters on field trips which seem to involve disrupting what goes on at abortion clinics, and hears why they feel that White's message is one that should be heard and heeded.

WEDNESDAY

Who Do You Think You Are?

BBC1, 8pm

As the 'last of the McKellens', the award-winning actor and civil rights champion Sir Ian McKellen admits to a degree of melancholy as delves into his family history, but the results pay off greatly. On his journey back through his family history, he discovers one of his ancestors was a Victorian political activist, and another relative was also linked to the theatre. Finally, Ian learns that previous generations of his family have a surprising link to an ancient druidical landmark in the Lake District.

Hospital

BBC2, 9pm

The spotlight moves to the neurological ward, where crane driver Phil is one of the most urgent cases.



Brainwashing Stacey, Tuesday, BBC1, 10.45pm

After collapsing at work he is becoming increasingly paralysed, and Kevin O'Neill, one of the country's leading brain surgeons, wants to remove the fast-growing brain tumour causing Phil's condition. It's a life-threatening operation, and time is of the essence – but securing theatre time in a hospital at bursting point proves to be far from simple.

But waiting times could be a thing of the past if revolutionary new treatments that don't involve invasive brain surgery prove to be successful. Consultant neurologist Dr Peter Bain is at the forefront of this work, and talks viewers through how using MRI-focussed ultrasound waves could replace knives and drills.

THURSDAY

Spy in the Wild

BBC1, 8pm

The undercover cameras reveal how animals rely upon each other for a range of activities. Arctic wolves group together to survive in one of the harshest landscapes on earth, a band of hungry mongoose groom warthogs for tasty morsels – before turning

their attention to Spy Warthog – and fish help clean hippos' bodies, as well as providing a unique dental service. Meanwhile, crocodiles and dikop birds take part in a mutual neighbourhood watch against hungry prowling monitor lizards, and Spy Rattlesnake captures how prairie dogs and burrowing owls use their language skills to tell the rest of their community of approaching danger.

FRIDAY

Eurovision: You Decide

BBC2, 7.30pm

It's now been 20 years since the UK won the Eurovision Song Contest – our last victors were Katrina and the Waves back in 1997 with Love Shine a Light. So that makes it all the more important that we find the right song to represent us this year, and the BBC are turning to the public to help with the search. Hosted by self-confessed Eurovision fan Mel Giedroyc from the Hammersmith Apollo, this live shows sees six short-listed acts taking to the stage in the hopes of impressing the viewers and a jury of music professionals. The panel will offer feedback on the songs – and some suggestions as to how they might be staged – before their scores are combined with the public vote to determine who will be flying the flag for the UK in Ukraine this year.

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Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.

8	4	3	6			8			17	23	5	8	
	21			12	24	11	21	19		13		5	
13	4	4	24	21		23	3	23	19	13	23		
	5			4	21		6		4			24	
	26	3	25	13	8	16	24	4		13	18	16	
8				17		5				11		18	
10	13	17	23	12	10		2	17	11	7	17	12	
25		15				15		8				13	
25	17	19		1	12	17	6	12	13	8	8		
13		3		12		9		13			5		
5	13	25	16	3		17		13	22	24	17	12	
23		13		18	23	17	8	16			14		
10	17	4	7							1	12	13	20

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
S	X	H	C	Q	O	P	I	F	J	V	W	Y
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
M	E	D	Z	R	A	B	G	K	L	N	T	U

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

- Cryptic Clues:**

Across

 - Everybody out of bed: this is the end! (3,2)
 - Cut nail for madman (7)
 - Take the lead in behaviour (7)
 - He has a suit, of course (5)
 - The majority of doctors get treatment first (4)
 - Charm by getting on stage? (8)
 - Plunge into a drinking-den (4)
 - At this point in the rehearsal (4)
 - Current minister is absolutely right (8)
 - Frank has nothing to write (4)
 - I break up game involving idol (5)
 - Compunction about code (7)
 - Try a leg in a big way (7)
 - Entertain, as doctors do (5)
- Down**

 - Obliging with lodgings, perhaps (13)
 - Rows involve falsehoods about Norman, initially (5)
 - Register pique when dupes get dyes this way (4)
 - The French temporary home is hidden (6)
 - Stagger from all quarters to see topical film (4-4)
 - Counter beat (7)
 - Complementary journalist (13)
 - Get too many degrees for comfort? (8)
 - Aver led race (7)
 - Violent tale about a thousand (6)
 - Clearing out of undesirables from group urgently needed (5)
 - Give out time is up (4)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8				9		
10			11			
		12		13		
16				14		
20				15		
22				16		
				17		
				18		
				19		
				20		
				21		
				22		
				23		

- Quick Clues:**
- Across**
- Force back (5)
 - Quell (7)
 - Scheme (7)
 - Subject (5)
 - Alleviate (4)
 - Reduce (8)
 - Act (4)
 - Profit (4)
 - Harshness (8)
 - Labyrinth (4)
 - Lighter (5)
 - Tedious (7)
 - Factor (7)
 - Urge (5)
- Down**
- Blameworthy (13)
 - Devout (5)
 - Dregs (4)
 - Preferably (6)
 - Fatherly (8)
 - Interpret (7)
 - Extreme reticence (13)
 - Respite (8)
 - Separate (7)
 - Rigorous (6)
 - Without help (5)
 - Neglect (4)

Sudoku

1	6					4	
	9		6	5			1
		5		8			7
	2	7				5	
5			4	2			9
4		7			8		2
6		1		3		2	
7	5					3	8

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

5	7	9	2	6	8	1	4	3
4	2	6	9	3	1	5	7	8
8	3	1	4	5	7	9	6	2
6	4	5	1	7	3	2	8	9
9	8	7	5	2	6	4	3	1
3	1	2	8	9	4	7	5	6
7	5	3	6	1	2	8	9	4
2	6	8	7	4	9	3	1	5
1	9	4	3	8	5	6	2	7

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 3 Spaghetti; 8 Ties; 9 Sovereign; 10 Roller; 11 Steed; 14 Lisle; 15 Note; 16 Remit; 18 Neil; 20 Rents; 21 Cities; 24 Marian; 25 Unmarried; 26 Shun; 27 Playing. Down: 1 Startling; 2 Realistic; 4 Poor; 5 Guest; 6 Eleven; 7 Bags; 9 Sewer; 11 Samos; 12 Downright; 13 Reasoning; 17 Tread; 19 Litany; 22 Earth; 23 Anil; 24 Mean. QUICK - Across: 3 Pseudonym; 8 Item; 9 Destitute; 10 Lessen; 11 Tenet; 14 Nurse; 15 True; 16 Rumba; 18 Sold; 20 Fount; 21 Yield; 24 Propel; 25 Reconcile; 26 Dawn; 27 Wrangling. Down: 1 Violinist; 2 Leisuredly; 4 Seen; 5 Untie; 6 Outset; 7 Yet; 9 Defer; 11 Timid; 12 Triumphal; 13 Pestilent; 17 Affre; 19 Disown; 22 Local; 23 Gear; 24 Plan.

Thinking space

Quiz

- What nationality was the painter Paul Klee?
- In which war were the Battles of Bull Run fought?
- Who won the 1994 Booker Prize?
- With which film did Marlene Dietrich win world fame?
- Whose wife was Helen of Troy?
- Of which Canadian province is Winnipeg the capital?
- In snooker, how many points is the brown ball worth?
- Which element has the symbol Na?
- What is a pond-skater?
- Which calendar includes the months Messidor and Thermidor?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Mallord; 2 Quango; 3 Jack Lemmon; 4 Trefoil; 5 Edward II; 6 1971; 7 Land of Nod; 8 Canada; 9 Dundee; 10 Orchids.

Niner: SPHERICAL

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

152785 gives a golf club,
34669 gives a second golf club,
297859833 gives an American golf course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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MONDAY. Quite possibly the worst day of the week. Back to work when you've just enjoyed a lovely, lazy weekend.

A harsh dose of reality after two days bliss. But on a cheeky day off, while the rest of the country began their nine-to-five, it was nice to know a leisurely lunch was imminent.

It seemed like a good idea to revisit a pub that was a four-star find 18 months ago and had not long reopened after a revamp.

It was a good decision and standards remain high, another four stars, and there would've been an extra half had there not been a salmon and spinach debacle – to be revealed in due course.

So on a rainy Monday we ventured to the warm and welcoming pub. Gone were the countrified and formal furnishings replaced with a fancy and modern eclectic mix of looks. Bright velvet seats were coupled with animal prints and plain bold colours. Metal lantern lights and huge light shades hung above our heads.

Our waitress, Amy, was bright and bubbly and very helpful. The menu has a great deal of choice which should satisfy the fussiest of eaters. It also has a fair few imaginative dishes.

Lisa Williams tucks in

Stand-out options include something that's all the rage at the moment – a Wagyu burger; there's also a fisherman's platter starter including Sloe gin smoked salmon with salmon caviar and crayfish cocktail in bloody Mary ketchup.

And for veggies there's a roasted winter vegetable tart stuffed with butternut squash, beetroot and Cropwell Bishop custard with a Stilton and walnut crumb; and also a buttermilk Southern Fried chicken stuffed with 'nduja sausage, with sweet potato fries, apple salad and preserved lemon aioli.

There are plenty of other simpler options too, sandwiches if you fancy a lighter bite, pizzas, pasta, salads and loads of meat and fish dishes.

We decided to go all out and have three courses. My other half went for the deep-fried Somerset Brie in panko breadcrumbs

with apricot and cumin chutney and I chose the Porcini Mushroom Arancini with lovage pesto.

My three golden orbs of arancini were delightful. The perfect crunch gave way to a heady mix of earthy mushrooms, salty and sticky mozzarella and al dente rice.

The Somerset Brie was a gooey splendour with stretchy strings of cheese. For mains he went for hearty man food, a steak, ale and Portobello mushroom pie with mashed potato, heritage carrots and seasonal greens.

Delicious

For me a fish dish from the specials menu, oven-baked salmon on a bed of tomato and garlic linguine with wilted spinach. A lovely shortcrust pastry pie appeared with a good helping of mashed potato and veg.

My salmon looked delicious with a gorgeously crispy skin but immediately I noticed the absence of the wilted spinach. I cut into the salmon and began to eat. There was a bone and then another. The fish was slightly slimy and when I poked in my fork further I could see it wasn't cooked.

Amy apologised profusely and with no

fuss she took away both meals. After a little wait they were returned to us. My salmon was back with spinach and cooked perfectly. The flavour of the tomato and the garlic in the linguine, which was cooked as pasta should be, was subtle but fresh and worked well with the fish.

The way the situation was handled and the quality of the fresh meals more than made up for the initial disappointment.

The pie was a success too, with the pastry getting top marks.

Despite feeling quite full we weren't leaving without sampling dessert. I wanted something lighter as I didn't want to end up feeling stuffed so went for the '200 calories or less' option.

This was strawberries and frozen natural yoghurt with honey ripple and rhubarb and rose flavour curd. It sounded refreshing and also the curd a little intriguing.

He went for something chocolatey, the melting golden chocolate bomb with caramel ice cream, chocolate popping candy and hot Devon cream toffee sauce.

We left with great big grins on our faces, full bellies and made a promise to return as soon as we possibly could!

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This house is for sale through agent Wakeman Estates at £315,000.

It has a reception hall, a cloakroom, dining room, a lounge, a farmhouse-style kitchen, a pantry, landing, four bedrooms, an en-suite shower room, a bathroom, separate WC, gardens, parking and a garage.

For further information, or to book that all important viewing, contact Wakeman Estates on 01384 459999 or visit www.wakeman-online.com

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HALESOWEN, Sunbury Road£795 pcm+Fees
A superbly presented modern detached family home in central Halesowen, perfect for Windsor & Earls High School & Halesowen College. Featuring a spacious lounge/dining area, conservatory, fitted kitchen, downstairs cloakroom, 3 good size bedrooms & family bathroom on the 1st floor. The property has a driveway for 2 cars & garage, gas central heating, double glazing and a lovely garden to the rear overlooking Windsor High School playing fields. EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN, Inkberrow Road£750 pcm+Fees
A 3/4 bedroom town house located in central Halesowen on the popular Huntlands estate comprising of: modern fitted kitchen, large living room, 3 double bedrooms plus bedroom 4/study, gas central heating, double glazed throughout, bathroom with shower, driveway for 3/4 vehicles, garage, private rear garden. Not to be missed! EPC: D



STOURBRIDGE, Baylie Street£725 pcm+Fees
Stunning mid terrace period property located in the sought after Stourbridge Old Quarter. This house has been finished to an exceptional standard and offers reception hall, generous through lounge, impressive kitchen with integrated appliances, utility room, guest w.c., two double bedrooms, superb bathroom with roll top bath and separate shower and good size loft room. Also features a courtyard garden and gas central heating and majority double glazed. EPC: D



BRIERLEY HILL, Walker Avenue£675 pcm+Fees
UNDERGOING A REFURBISHMENT! A modern semi-detached house offering spacious family, accommodation comprising of: entrance hallway, large lounge, fitted kitchen, 3 good sized bedrooms, new bathroom with shower, driveway parking & garage. EPC: C



HALESOWEN, Long Innage£675 pcm+Fees
UNDERGOING A REFURBISHMENT! A modern link detached house offering spacious family home in this most popular location, having spacious accommodation comprising large lounge, fitted kitchen, rear garden with decking, 3 good sized bedrooms, family bathroom with corner bath & separate shower, driveway parking & garage. EPC: E



HALESOWEN, Rossendale Close£650 pcm+Fees
A lovely 2 bedroom semi detached bungalow in a quiet cul-de-sac, newly decorated & carpeted. Also ideal for the number 9 bus in to Stourbridge, Halesowen and Birmingham. Featuring modern fitted kitchen with oven/hob, large lounge, conservatory (Off the bedrooms), 2 good size bedrooms, bathroom with shower, driveway & private rear garden. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Hunnington Crescent£650 pcm+Fees
Recently redecorated and carpeted. This huge 3 bedroom town house has had a full redecoration, carpets and boiler. This house will not stay around for long as its so close to Halesowen Town Centre. Featuring 3 bedrooms, a large lounge with stunning views, bathroom with shower, driveway and garage parking, downstairs wc, small low maintenance rear garden. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Newton Court£650 pcm+Fees
City style penthouse living in Halesowen! A stunning 3 bedroom 1st floor apartment finished to an extremely high standard and offering an incredible amount of flexible living accommodation. Situated within a deluxe development of just 3 luxury apartments. Featuring 2 double bedrooms with fitted wardrobes, 1 single bedroom, 2 bathrooms and separate walk-in showers, striking living accommodation and views into the adjacent trees. Secondary glazing ensures



HALESOWEN, Blackberry Lane£625 pcm+Fees
Not to be missed! A lovely mid terrace in a very popular location close to Town Centre having been newly painted & new carpets upstairs comprising of: Lounge, fitted dining kitchen with appliances, 2 bedrooms & a further carpeted left room accessed by strong & sturdy wooden ladders, refitted bathroom, central heating & double glazing, private rear garden with storage shed, on road parking, available now. EPC: D



NETHERTON, Copse Road £595 pcm+Fees
A semi-detached house that has been fully refurbished to a high standard comprising of: Hallway, front lounge, large kitchen/dining area, 3 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, front & rear gardens with driveway & additional parking to rear. Solar panels installed saving up to 30% on electric bills. EPC: D



ROWLEY REGIS, The Avenue£595 pcm+Fees
A fantastic opportunity to rent a new build property in a very convenient location close to train & bus links. The 2 bed semi-detached is finished to an exceptional standard. The property features a spacious lounge with patio doors leading to a low maintenance garden, modern fitted kitchen with cooker/hob, downstairs w.c., 2 double bedrooms, rear garden, driveway parking, double glazing and gas central heating. MINIMUM CONTRACT OF 12 MONTHS. EPC: B



HALESOWEN, Cobham Road£595 pcm+Fees
Well presented 2 double bedroom mid terrace house situated in this popular residential location being in walking distance of Halesowen Town Centre. This property benefits from 2 reception rooms, 1 with dining area & patio doors leading to rear garden, kitchen, downstairs bathroom with shower, 2 double bedrooms, double glazing and gas central heating. EPC: E



HALESOWEN, Beecher Road£575 pcm+Fees
A very well presented semi-detached house, in a sought after area for Colley Lane Primary School and bus links. Featuring a large living room, fitted kitchen, 3 bedrooms, family bathroom with shower, double glazing, gas central heating, front and rear gardens, driveway parking. EPC: D



WORDSLEY, Lyndhurst Drive£550 pcm+Fees
Fantastic size property and a great location for local shops and transport links to Kingswinford, Stourbridge and Wordsley. This wonderfully presented semi-detached house features 2 double bedrooms, large dining kitchen, spacious lounge, bathroom with shower, gas central heating, double glazing, driveway parking. EPC: D



HALESOWEN/COLLEY GATE, Park Road£550 pcm+Fees
A modern mid terrace house on the number 9 bus route to Halesowen, Stourbridge and Birmingham. Having been completely re-decorated and new carpets throughout, briefly comprising Lounge, kitchen/dining area, rear garden, 2 bedrooms, master with en-suite, a further house bathroom, gas central heating, double glazing, 1 allocated parking space, unfurnished. EPC: C



CRADLEY HEATH/OLD HILL, Sidaway Street£525 pcm+Fees
A well presented mid terraced property within walking distance to Old Hill. This home offers 2 reception rooms, modern fitted kitchen and utility area, downstairs shower room, 2 double bedrooms with 3rd room off master ideal for a dressing room or study, low maintenance garden, double glazing and electric heating. EPC: F



CRADLEY HEATH, Luanne Close£495 pcm+Fees
Situated in this popular residential area, is this top floor apartment, which overlooks the canal and has its own balcony, comprising of: 2 bedrooms, spacious lounge, fitted kitchen, bathroom with shower, access to balcony from the master bedroom, gas central heating, double glazing, allocated parking. Well worth an inspection. EPC: B



OLDSWINFORD, Heath Lane£495 pcm+Fees
Ideally located in the centre of Oldswinford for shops, transport links and Mary Stevens Park. This large and spacious and terrace house features 3 good size bedrooms, 2 reception rooms, downstairs bathroom, upstairs toilet, fitted kitchen, enclosed rear garden and on road parking. EPC: E



STOURBRIDGE, Stambermill House£425 pcm+Fees
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STOURBRIDGE, Stambermill House£425 pcm+Fees
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WORCESTER, Martley Road£410 pcm+Fees
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It is an offence under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to carry out gas work in the UK without being on the Gas Safe Register.

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4 Pets & Animals

equestrian corner

ALL READERS are advised to check if Horses have the required Passport information.

pets corner

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:

1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with it's Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

CHOP

Handsome long legged Staffie boy, 3 years old, white with tan patches.

Chop is a very friendly dog and is good with most other dogs.

A responsible home is needed for him where someone would be at home most of the day, as he does suffer from separation anxiety.

Please call 01384 252158.

www.dogsamaritans.org.uk

KIND HOMES WANTED
PEGGY - 1 year old Border Collie.
JOEY - 18 month old Tri coloured Collie.
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SCAMPY - 7 year old lovely little Jack Russell.
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www.dogsamaritans.org.uk

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vets

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guns & dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
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5 Business & Farming

business opportunities

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6 Property

accommodation to let

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NOTICE TO READERS It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

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Houses / Land Required

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overseas property

NOTICE TO READERS
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7 Jobs

employment wanted

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8 Motoring

cars under £1500

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Ideal first car.

£550.

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EXCELLENT CONDITION

JAGUAR X-TYPE

52 plate, 2.0, immaculate condition, 59,000 miles. Jaguar FSH from new, metallic grey, one owner, MoT'd, two keys.

£1,495

07867 685569.

BARGAIN

JAGUAR X-TYPE

Grey.

9 months MoT.

65,000 miles.

£895 ono.

Telephone 07973 282911 or 01902 688615.

MUST BE SEEN

MINI ONE

2004, silver,

part service history,

MoT,

excellent condition.

£950. o.n.o.

07976 645763.

MUST BE SEEN

MINI ONE

2004, silver,

part service history,

MoT,

excellent condition.

£950. o.n.o.

07976 645763.

SUPER BARGAIN

MITSUBISHI LANCER

08 reg.

Automatic, MoT June 2017, 70,000 miles, air con.

Excellent condition.

£895.

Telephone 0121 291 3103.

IMMACULATE

PEUGEOT 207

1.6Hdi.S, 2010, black.

long MoT.

cheap tax and to run.

£1,495.

07486 570018.

SUZUKI IGNIS

55 reg, automatic, 1 owner from new, 10 months MoT, drives like new, good condition, any trial

£895.

07540 474922.

MUST BE SEEN

VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 BREEZE

S Reg. 5 door. Hatchback. E/W. C/L. PAS. Silver.

MoT Nov 17.

Radio cassette player.

64,000 miles.

Nice tidy car.

£595 ono.

01562 752815.

1ST TO SEE WILL BUY

VAUXHALL CORSA DESIGN

2005 reg, silver.

51,000 miles, long MoT,

Bargain **£895.**

07913 981460.

1ST TO SEE WILL BUY

VAUXHALL CORSA DESIGN

2005 reg, silver.

51,000 miles, long MoT,

Bargain **£895.**

07913 981460.

LOOK

FORD FIESTA ZETEC

2012, 23,000 miles, 3 door, only used as second car, showroom condition, alloys etc, as new.

£3,100.

07833 076209.

4X4

LANDROVER DISCOVERY TDS ES PREMIUM

Auto 2002, metallic blue, 1 previous owner, low miles, FSH, MoT, RR Alloys with AT tyres, full electric leather, every extra fitted, genuine tidy vehicle.

£6,650 ono

07971 284856 or 01746 861841.

KIA SEDONA LE 3.0 MPV DIESEL

04/54, two owners, roof rails, 60,000 miles, fsh, cam belt replaced, MoT September 2017, RCL, EW, factory dvd, tow bar, privacy windows,

£1,900.

07518 327271 Kidderminster.

LOOK

MINI COUPE

1.6, 04 plate.

lady owner.

FSH, MoT.

Mint condition.

£2000.

07516 660557

IMMACULATE

NISSAN MICRA 3 DOOR

2010 Reg.

60,000 miles.

Good MoT.

Immaculate condition.

One owner.

Red.

£2,495.

07486 578439.

NISSAN NOTE

blue, radio, CD, Bluetooth, full service history, 2008 reg 1.4 engine. MoT March 2017, alloy wheels, 105,000 miles, all electric, Air con, ABS,

Very good condition.

£2,000 ono.

07950 727297

1ST TO SEE WILL BUY

VAUXHALL CORSA LIFE 1.0

59 plate, red, 3-dr, 51,000 genuine miles, long MoT, very nice condition, 1st to see will buy, absolute bargain.

£2,795 ono

Part exchange may be considered.

07985 588532.

classic cars

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commercial vehicles

RENAULT MASTER LWB VAN

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07984 269585.

VAUXHALL ASTRA Sportive van, silver. 04 reg, alloy wheels, excellent condition. Bargain **£895.**

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scrap vehicles

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or email marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk (remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

10 Personals

personal

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solvent, own home and car, seeks genuine, honest, smart lady, 60-72, who enjoys dining, days out, theatre, pleasant company to enjoy life.

A.L.A.

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Single Moms welcome.

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general

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ClassifiedAds

BUY LOCAL, SELL LOCAL

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And the winner is . . . the new i10

By James Parker

The new i10 has been awarded What Car?'s Best City Car award for the fourth consecutive year.

Steve Huntingford, What Car? editor said: "We have no hesitation in singling out the i10 as our winner: it's cheap to buy and to run, comfy, and easy to drive in town. But it also has luxuries that you rarely get in this class, plus a five-year warranty. The i10 feels like a class above the rest, with the most room, the smartest interior and the smoothest engine. The i10 is a proper, grown-up car, not just a mere runaround, and that's why it's our favourite city car."

The new i10 1.2 Premium SE also won "Best buy for more than £10,000". Huntingford said: "We recommend top-spec Premium SE trim, which now gets class-leading infotainment on a 7.0 inch touchscreen, sat-nav, Apple CarPlay, Bluetooth and a DAB radio. You also get climate control, heated seats and a heated steering wheel – all on a city car. The rest of the i10 remains as appealing as ever."

Tony Whitehorn, president and CEO, Hyundai Motor UK said "Since its launch in 2014, i10 has continually received praise from both industry and buyers alike and has become one of the stalwarts of our range. For 2017, we have introduced new i10 which not only introduces a fresh new look but also brings technology to the segment that is usually only found in the classes above."

External changes to the new i10 include the first implementation of the new cascading grille, a feature which will define the exterior design of future Hyundai models. The redesigned front bumper also includes with updated LED Daytime Running Lights



External changes include the new cascading grille



Latest connectivity features are all integrated

on Premium and Premium SE models. At the rear, the i10 is also characterised by an evolved bumper design with a black inlay and round fog lights and refreshed rear lights with a darker housing for a sportier look. Redesigned side mouldings with a new shape and size round off the resh profile.

The new i10 also introduces two new safety technologies to the i10 range, with Lane Departure Warning System (LDWS) and

Forward Collision Warning System (FCWS) forming the Driver Assist Pack, available as an option on SE, Premium and Premium SE trim.

The new i10 also makes advanced technology available to more people than ever before. Responding to customer demand for simple connectivity features, the Premium SE includes the latest connectivity features, all integrated into the new seven-inch touchscreen navigation system. Apple

CarPlay and Android Auto guarantee seamless integration, safe operation and mirrored functionality of mobile devices based on iOS or the Android operating system. In order to be up-to-date, the i10 Premium SE's navigation system comes with a seven-year free subscription to LIVE Services, offering real-time traffic and weather conditions, points of interest as well as the position of speed cameras in countries where this is permitted

by law. Customers do not even have to choose: the Premium SE is the only car in its class to offer Android Auto, Apple CarPlay and LIVE Services in a single infotainment system.

The handling has a modified steering gear ratio for a more direct feel, whilst larger front shock absorber bump stops enhance both ride comfort and lower suspension noise transmission into the cabin.

New i10 is available from £8,495 on the road.



At the rear the i10 is characterised by an evolved bumper design with a black inlay



Contract Hire

Transporter T26 SWB Van EU6 2.0 TDI 102PS
Startline BMT contract hire^ example based on 3 years, 10,000 mile per annum non-maintained Contract Hire agreement:

On the road retail cash price	£24,813.00
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Tel: 01902 357230



Contract Hire Terms and Conditions. ^ At the end of the agreement the vehicle and ownership rights will stay with Volkswagen Commercial Vehicle Financial Services.

*Plus VAT and with a customer initial rental. Business users only. Offer available for orders by 2nd April 2017 from participating Van Centres. Offers may be varied or withdrawn at any time. Further charges may apply when vehicle is returned, subject to the contract fair wear and tear guidelines and mileage. VAT payable at a prevailing rate. Finance subject to status. Available to 18s and over. Subject to availability. Terms and conditions apply. Accurate at time of publication [01/2017]. Freeport Volkswagen Commercial Vehicle Financial Services.

Renault's first new car offers for 2017

Renault has announced a selection of offers that make owning a car from the French manufacturer even more of a tempting proposition.

With a strong focus on convenience and affordability, Renault UK has introduced brand-new two-year 0 per cent APR PCP Selections packages. Available on new Clio, Captur, all-new Mégane and all-new Mégane Sport Tourer, Kadjar, all-new Scénic and all-new Grand Scénic, these deals offer the lowest monthly payments of any of Groupe Renault UK's Selections PCP packages and, as with the brand's other PCP offers, come with the added benefit of no minimum customer deposit.

As an example, the ever-popular new Clio with its recently refreshed styling and enhanced interior and equipment can be driven from only £129 per month on a two-year 0 per cent APR PCP Selections package¹. The deal on the Play 1.2 16V 75 version also includes a manufacturer deposit contribution of £850 and a customer deposit of £3,588.

Additionally, Renault UK's popular three-year 3.99 per cent APR Selections PCP packages are more affordable than ever. The deposit contributions are now the same as those for similar deals over a four-year duration, with the additional manufacturer support working to lower the total amount payable and the cost of interest.

Available alongside a variety of 0 per cent APR HP offers, the new and revised Selections PCP packages ensure that drivers enjoy even greater choice when it comes to financing their new Renault.

Cash buyers also benefit from the limited time offers. Notably, there are sizeable



The all-new Scenic is included in the offer



Two year 0 per cent finance on the new Mégane

savings across the innovative, rear-engined, rear-wheel drive Renault Twingo range with prices starting from only £7,995 for the Expression SCe 70 – representing a saving of £1,500 on the normal list price up to savings of £2,410 on the Dynamique S TCe 90 Auto which is now available from £11,395.

Multiple cash offers are available for anyone considering joining the ever-increasing number of drivers choosing an electric vehicle with the multiple award-winning Renault

Zoe in Expression Nav guise available from £11,995 (inc PICG) – representing a £2,000 customer saving. With the longest range of any mainstream electric vehicle – up to 250 miles (NEDC Combined) or an estimated 186 miles in real world conditions – the new ZOE Dynamique R90 Z.E 40 is now available for £15,845 (inc PICG), representing a customer saving of £2,000.

Alternatively, the new Zoe Dynamique R90 Z.E 40 can be driven away available on a



Renault's Clio has recently been refreshed and the interior enhanced

five year 0 per cent APR HP package with nil customer deposit and a £2,500 manufacturer deposit contribution. In addition to all retail purchases, customers will receive a free 7kW Wall-Box home charger, making their ownership experience of the four-time winner of the What Car? 'Best Electric Car for up to £20,000' and their 2017 'Electric Car of the Year' even more convenient.

With the offers available on vehicles registered by the end of March, customers

will save further by avoiding the changes in Vehicle Excise Duty that are applicable from April 1, 2017. By ordering and registering their new Renault before this date they can potentially enjoy three-figure savings.

Customers will also benefit from the Renault 4+ warranty and Renault Assistance vehicle recovery scheme, which comes as standard with every Renault and provides the ultimate peace of mind for four years or 100,000 miles.

Express Repairs for Minor Accident Damage



✓ Bumper scuffs

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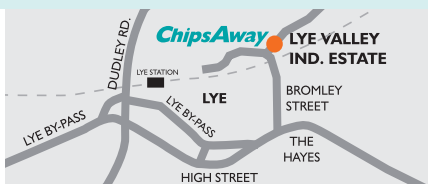
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Special edition to mark the last 100 current Civic Type R



Black Edition is expected to be a collector's item

Honda has unveiled a Black Edition of the Civic Type R. Commemorating the last of the current Civic Type R to come off the production line, this version is limited to the last 100 cars to come off the production line and Honda is expecting the version to become a true collector's item.

Already on their way to dealers across the country, the Civic Type R Black Edition features a predominantly black interior with red accents which add to the premium cabin feel, whilst the exterior is differentiated from the standard version by red rear wing end plates on the spoiler.

With production of the current Civic Type R at Honda's factory in Swindon now finished, the factory is gearing up for the next generation Civic, which goes on sale in March, and the new Civic Type R version, which is expected to hit retail forecourts in the latter half of this year.

With pricing based on the existing GT model at £32,300

OTR, Honda is expecting the Civic Type R Black Edition to sell out quickly.

Billed as a 'race car for the road', the British built Honda Civic Type R is powered by the most extreme and high-performing Type R engine ever built.

"The direct-injected turbocharged 2.0 litre VTEC TURBO petrol engine delivers outstanding power, torque and performance figures for the front-wheel drive hot hatch segment."

"Peak power output is 310 PS at 6,500 rpm, and peak torque is 400 Nm at 2,500 rpm – both higher than for any previous Honda Civic Type R model."

Phil Webb, head of cars at Honda UK, commented: "There are only going to be 2,500 of the current Civic Type Rs on UK roads, so the car is going to be pretty special as it is – but with the addition of this special limited run of 100 Black Editions to the product line up and owners will have a real collectors piece on their hands."



Graham Taylor on becoming Wolves boss with chairman Jonathan Hayward



Graham Taylor is awarded the OBE in 2002



Taylor following his appointment as England manager



Taylor signs Paul McGrath and Kent Nielsen at Villa

Intelligent, visionary and breath of fresh air

IT WAS a hot day in early May, 1990, and Villa fans were bouncing. Literally bouncing.

The final game of the season had ended in a thrilling 3-3 draw at Everton and Villa had finished second in the old First Division behind Liverpool.

The away end at Goodison Park was shaking. It was the first time as a teenage fan I had felt a stand move beneath my feet. I was 18 and giddy with heat, excitement and a few pints at a pub stop just off the M6.

Thousands of Villa fans had made the journey to Merseyside and it was the worst kept secret in football that this was Graham Taylor's goodbye to the claret and blue faithful.

We all knew he would be taking over from Bobby Robson after the World Cup in Italy.

This is the man who had built Watford and taken them all the way from the Fourth Division to the First in five years and capped it with an FA Cup final at Wembley.

Plunged

Villa, meanwhile, had gone the other way. League champions in 1981, European champions in 1982, they had plunged into the Second Division within five years of that glorious night in Rotterdam.

In the darkest of times of his chairmanship, Doug Ellis made his shrewdest ever move. He recruited Taylor. The new manager was then just 42 and wasted no time in describing the club as 'a shambles' as he walked through the doors of Villa Park.

He was the breath of fresh air all Villa fans had craved. His first season saw Villa promoted back at the first attempt. He brought in David Platt and Alan McNally, while midfielder Andy Gray came in from Crystal Palace as his more famous namesake went out of the door to neighbours Albion.

SPORTING MEMORIES

Russell Youll pays tribute

Taylor later recounted how that farewell moved him to tears. It remains still my greatest memory as a football fan.

Villa finished in second, going up on goal difference ahead of Middlesbrough. The following season, Villa escaped relegation by a single point. But what a season followed.

Taylor signed Paul McGrath from Manchester United and Villa cut a swathe through the First Division, with a classy edge provided by a reborn Gordon Cowans and a rampant Platt. In the end, Villa ended the season nine points behind champions Liverpool but it was a closer race than that.

But when we boarded that bus to Goodison on May 5, 1990, we knew we were saying goodbye to Taylor as Villa boss, although we didn't know then he would return one day for a second spell. When the final whistle blew the players thanked the fans, Taylor applauded the supporters and left the pitch.

But when the Goodison gates opened but not a single Villa fan left. As 'Graham Taylor's claret and blue army' echoed around a stadium devoid of Everton fans, it was clear the Villans would not leave until Taylor returned one final time.

It must have been some 20 minutes after the final whistle when he emerged. I will never forget his hands clasped together in triumph and thanks. Tay-

lor recounted in an interview some years later how that farewell moved him to tears. It remains still my greatest memory as a football fan. For that Graham, I thank you.

Taylor's time at Wolves was fairly brief – he lasted little more than 18 months before he was hounded out by angry supporters and an impatient board. But it was certainly memorable.

It was a huge coup for Wolves to land Taylor in March 1994. Having been vilified and castigated for his role as England boss, Taylor saw it as a chance to resurrect his career – as well as rejuvenate a sleeping giant, backed by Sir Jack Hayward's millions.

Wolves just fell short of the play-offs and then, armed with a war chest of £4.5m, Taylor brought in Tony Daley, Steve Froggatt, Neil Emblen, Don Goodman and John De Wolf.

Four of those five players suffered serious injuries in 1994/95 but Taylor oversaw a truly thrilling campaign. Wolves scored 77 goals, the highest in the league and 10 more than champions Middlesbrough, but conceded 61 (rock-bottom Notts County let in 66).

Injuries, and three 3-3 draws in six games, meant Wolves had to settle for the play-offs again – and Bolton's John McGinlay crushed their dreams.

The next season started badly and Taylor was forced to resign amid supporter protests.

Despite his regrets at not being able to complete the job, he would always speak fondly of Wolves. And those fans (and Jonathan Hayward) who forced him out would concede he departed too soon, especially when watching Taylor take Watford to the top flight in 1999.

Taylor's legacy was laying the foundations for the club's youth scheme and a training ground of their own. He demanded they move to Compton. He also later convinced his Watford protégé Kenny Jackett to take the Wolves job. Another wise decision from a deeply intelligent football visionary.



Taylor, flanked by new signings John de Wolf and Don Goodman at Molineux in 1994



Graham Taylor arrives at Villa Park in 1987. He transformed the club he described as a 'shambles' on arrival



Promotion hopes come to the four

CUP heroes Stourbridge have put themselves well in the mix for promotion from the Evo-Stik League Premier Division thanks to two successive 4-0 victories.

Gary Hackett's side were superb as they blew away bottom-of-the-table Skelmersdale on Saturday with a stunning first-half display.

Full-back Kristian Green broke from the halfway line and let fly with a spectacular 25-yard shot, which struck the underside of the bar on its way in.

The league's top scorer Luke Benbow swivelled to fire home his 16th of the season before a Dylan Smith own goal made it three. Matt Dodd set up Chris Lait for the fourth.

Skelmersdale's misery was complete when Smith was sent off after picking up two yellow cards.

Strike duo Benbow and Jordan Archer bagged a brace each as the Glassboys beat Mickleover Sports by the same scoreline on Tuesday night.

After dominating from the outset, it came as no surprise when they opened the scoring on 14 minutes. Kayleden Brown wriggled free on the right and cut back for Tom Tonks to have a shot blocked but Benbow was on hand to bundle home the rebound.

A somewhat inevitable second arrived on 26 minutes when Duggan headed a Tonks corner back across goal and Stuart Pierpoint nodded down for Archer to guide into corner while on the turn.

Two goals in seven minutes followed after the break. Matt Dodd's shot from the edge of the box was charged down but broke kindly for Archer to curl a 20-yard effort into Jamie Green's top left corner. Then Benbow left the home custodian with no chance with a swerving 25-yard free-kick.

Meanwhile, centre-half Dan Scarr, aged 22, has been on trial at both Albion and Birmingham. Boss Hackett said: "Dan's been playing really well lately and it's no surprise one or two people are taking notice."

Boxing clever as improvements to club are completed

IMPROVEMENT works at Dudley's Priory Park Boxing Club have finished, thanks to more than £19,000 worth of funding from Cory Environmental Trust in Britain.

The club was in need of an upgrade to its original building in order to bring it up to modern standards. The plan was to create a functional training room that could be used by club members as well as the wider community.

Priory Park approached CETB for £19,547 to purchase new equipment to deliver a functional training programme for a range of people from a variety of backgrounds. The equipment can be used by those with disabilities, as well as able-bodied community members.

Boxing club chairman Paul Gough said: "We are delighted with the improvements that have been made to the club, and the new equipment we've had installed will be beneficial to individuals from all walks of life."

Farewell to an Albion 'unsung hero'



Brian Whitehouse

TRIBUTES have been paid to former Albion player and coach Brian Whitehouse, who has died aged 81.

Whitehouse, who made 46 appearances for the Baggies during the 1950s, is regarded as something of an unsung hero at The Hawthorns for his work as a coach two decades later.

Whitehouse handed Bryan Robson his first team debut during a three-game spell as caretaker boss following Don Howe's sacking in 1975. He remained on the coaching staff during the reigns of Johnny Giles and Ron Atkinson before following the latter to Manchester United.

Ally Robertson, who was also restored to the first-team during Whitehouse's caretaker spell, said: "Brian helped bring a lot of young players through."

"There were several of us who benefited from his guidance and he was an unsung hero in many senses."

Whitehouse, a striker, netted 17 goals for the Baggies including two in the 1957 FA Cup semi-final against Villa. But with Ronnie Allen, Ray Barlow and Bobby Robson also on the club's

books, opportunities were limited and he left The Hawthorns in 1960, joining Norwich City, his career later taking in stops at Wrexham, Crystal Palace, Charlton and Leyton Orient.

His coaching career began at Arsenal, where he led the Gunners youngsters to victory in the 1971 FA Youth Cup, while assisting Howe who was taking the first-team to a league and cup double. When Howe later moved to Albion, Whitehouse followed.

He leaves behind wife Barbara, son Adam and four grandchildren.

Strikers put end to Yeltz barren run

Halesowen Town 2 Whitby Town 0
A GOAL in each half from strikers Tristian Dunkley and George Bowerman boosted Halesowen to a much-needed first win in 11 games.

The Yeltz proved to be full value for their half-time lead against their higher placed opponents and visiting goal-keeper Shane Bland kept out two efforts from Dunkley midway through the first half. But Bland couldn't prevent dangerous Dunkley scoring his first Halesowen goal in the 37th minute following a superb turn on the edge of the area.

Whitby's best first-half effort came in the 43rd minute when Dale Hopson struck a half-volley inches past the post.

After the interval, the Seasideers pinned the Yeltz back for long spells, but lacked the end quality to turn possession into goals. Dan Platt made a great save to keep the scores level from Hopson's shot after an hour and, as the pressure continued, Callum Martin blasted wide before curling another effort over the bar.

Whitby substitute Matthew Tymon then fired two late efforts wide.

Bowerman doubled Halesowen's lead in the final minute when he robbed defender Luke Bythway to slot past Bland.

Halesowen manager John Hill expressed his relief at the long-awaited victory.

"We worked really hard against a team near the top and I was delighted with our clean sheet, as well as both our strikers hitting goals. We do need to add to the squad, but the win helps confidence for the next game."

Water way to get new year started

A STOURBRIDGE sports club is inviting people to make a unique new year's resolution by learning to kayak.

Volunteers from Stourbridge Arm Canoe Club are running an introductory six-week course starting on March 4.

The hour-long sessions will take place on Saturday evenings at Haden Hill Leisure Centre. The course will conclude with a scenic trip along the Stourbridge Canal and a paddle on the River Severn.

It is suitable for adults and juniors and costs £95, including instruction, the use of kayaks and all equipment and 14 months' club membership.

The club meets weekly from April to October at their canal-side clubhouse on the corner of Ashwood Park, Kinver Street, Wordsley and at Haden Hill Leisure Centre in the winter months.

Call Mark Harding on 0121 550 6886 or email stourbridgearmcanoeclub@gmail.com

★★★

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OLD HALES LET LEAD SLIP AWAY

Old Towcestrians 19 Old Halesonians 12
IT WAS a similar story for Hales, who led 12-0 before failing to defeat.

The visitors took control and within 10 minutes winger Luke Smith outpaced the opposition to score. Ian Briggs converted.

It was 12-0 when Joe Collingham presented the ball to scrum half Martin Hooker, he passed to Chris Hooper, to Carl Robinson who broke the defence for a try.

But Tows came back and pressure resulted in Hales back row Adam Clayton receiving a yellow card for a high tackle. This was followed on 40 minutes by a yellow card for Smith for another high tackle, leading to a penalty try and the score at 12-7 and Hales down to 13 men.

The second half was a dour battle on a really heavy pitch. The home side kept the ball and rolling mauls resulted in a try. Hales could not break the home defence and on 76 minutes, the more inventive home side scored a converted try to win. Hales meet Peterborough Lions at home on Saturday, kick off 2.15pm.

Deadlock

The second team lost 76-0, but the thirds were successful, beating local rivals Stourbridge 46-0 to go second in the league.

Old Hales broke the deadlock when a kick and chase down the right wing resulted in an obstruction by a Stourbridge player 12 metres from the try line. Old Hales took a quick tap penalty to Tony Shaw who dipped his shoulder and dispatched the first tackler then powered his way over for a try.

Left winger Joel Keenan stole the ball and crossed the line to make the score 10-0.

Keenan was in the action again when he collected another cross field kick and stepped on the gas to outpace the defence for his second try.

Steve Deakin added to his season's tally and Rhys Arthur slotted the conversion. Deakin then raced through for his second.

Just before half time, Keenan completed his hat-trick, with Arthur adding the extras.

Stourbridge held their own for the first 20 minutes of the second half, but the breakthrough came through Callum Weston, Deakin with the conversion. Jack Elliot finished off a good afternoon.

Wrestlers get ready to rumble



Andy Hendrix, of Halesowen, is among the entrants at the Pro-Wrestling Live event

PROFESSIONAL wrestlers will take part in a 'Rileys Rumble' next weekend - hours before American giants WWE stage their flagship battle royal event.

World Wrestling Entertainment stage their 30th Royal Rumble at the Alamodome in Texas on Sunday, January 29.

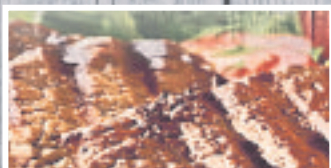
Box Office purchasers in the UK will watch proceedings on pay-per-view from the early hours of Monday. Rileys Sports Bar, on Broad Street Wolverhampton, is staying open to screen the event after holding a bill of its own.

Promoter and grappler Matt Powell, from

Walsall, aka Dad Dog Maxx, will bring Pro Wrestling Live to Rileys. A full wrestling show will be topped by their own 30-man over the top rope 'Royal Rumble', where 28 competitors, including British champion Andy Hendrix, of Halesowen, will join the fray 30 seconds at a time after two have started the bout.

It starts at 7pm. Entry is £6, or £10 VIP and a family of four at £20. Call 07404 279 880.

There is no extra charge for those who have paid to watch the PWL to stay and watch the WWE Rumble. Alternatively, entry to the WWE Rumble is £5 from 10pm. Over-18s only.

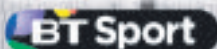


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